ANSTER FAIR,

A

POEM, IN SIX CANTOS.

WITH

OTHER POEMS.

SECOND EDITION.

Wm Tennant. Professor

Nec pol ego Nemeæ credo, neque ego Olympiæ,
Neque usquam ludos tam festivos fieri,
Quam hic intus fiunt ludi ludificabiles.

PLAUTI, Casina.

——sane leve
Dum nihil habemus majus calamo ludimus.

PHÆDRI Fab.

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PREFACE.

The following Poem is presented to the Public with that diffidence and anxiety, which every young Author feels when the good or bad fate of his first production must check his rashness and vanity, or enliven his future efforts with the confidence arising from popular approbation.

The Poem is written in stanzas of octave rhime, or the *ottava rima* of the Italians, a measure said to be invented by Boccaccio, and after him employed by Tasso and Ariosto. From these writers it was transferred into

English Poetry by Fairfax, in his Translation of "Jerusalem Delivered," but since his days, has been by our poets, perhaps, too little cultivated. The stanza of Fairfax is here shut with the Alexandrine of Spenser, that its close may be more full and sounding.

In a humorous Poem, partly descriptive of Scottish manners, it was impossible to avoid using Scottish words. These, however, will, it is hoped, be found not too many. Some old English words are likewise admitted.

The transactions of ANSTER FAIR may be supposed to have taken place during the reign of James V. a Monarch, whom tradition reports to have had many gamesome rambles in Fife, and with whose liveliness and jollity of temper the merriment of the FAIR did not ill accord. Yet a scrupulous

congruity with the modes of his times was not intended, and must not be expected. Ancient and modern manners are mixed and jumbled together, to heighten the humour, or variegate the description.

EDINBURGH,
23d *June*, 1814.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO I.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO I.

I.

While some of Troy and pettish heroes sing,
And some of Rome and chiefs of pious fame,
And some of men that thought it harmless thing
To smite off heads in Mars's bloody game,
And some of Eden's garden gay with spring,
And Hell's dominions terrible to name,—
I sing a theme far livelier, happier, gladder,
I sing of Anster Fair, and bonny Maggie Lauder.

II.

What time from east, from west, from south, from north,
From every hamlet, town, and smoky city,
Laird, clown, and beau, to Anster Fair came forth,
The young, the gay, the handsome, and the witty,
To try in various sport and game their worth,
Whilst prize before them MAGGIE sat, the pretty,
And after many a feat, and joke, and banter,
Fair MAGGIE's hand was won by mighty ROB the RANTER.

III.

Muse, that from top of thine old Greekish hill,
Didst the harp-fing'ring Theban younker view,
And on his lips bid bees their sweets distil,
And gav'st the chariot that the white swans drew,
O let me scoop, from thine ethereal rill,
Some little palmfuls of the blessed dew,
And lend the swan-drawn car, that safely I,
Like him, may scorn the earth, and burst into the sky.

IV.

Our themes are like; for he the games extoll'd
 Held in the chariot-shaken Grecian plains,
Where the vain victor, arrogant and bold,
 A pickle parsley got for all his pains;
I sing of sports more worthy to be told,
 Where better prize the Scottish victor gains;
What were the crowns of Greece but wind and bladder,
Compared with marriage-bed of bonnie MAGGIE LAUDER?

V.

And O that king Apollo would but grant
 A little spark of that transcendant flame,
That fir'd the Chian rhapsodist to chant
 How vied the bowmen for Ulysses' dame,
And him of Rome to sing how Atalant
 Plied, dart in hand, the suitor-slaught'ring game,
Till the bright gold, bowl'd forth along the grass,
Betray'd her to a spouse, and stopp'd the bounding lass.

VI.

But lo! from bosom of yon southern cloud,
I see the chariot come which Pindar bore;
I see the swans, whose white necks, arching proud,
Glitter with golden yoke, approach my shore;
For me they come—O Phœbus, potent god!
Spare, spare me now--Enough, good king--no more--
A little spark I ask'd in moderation,
Why scorch me ev'n to death with fiery inspiration?

VII.

My pulse beats fire—my pericranium glows,
Like baker's oven, with poetic heat;
A thousand bright ideas, spurning prose,
Are in a twinkling hatch'd in Fancy's seat;
Zounds! they will fly, out at my ears and nose,
If through my mouth they find not passage fleet;
I hear them buzzing deep within my noddle,
Like bees that in their hives confus'dly hum and huddle.

VIII.

How now?—what's this?—my very eyes, I trow,
Drop on my hands their base prosaic scales;
My visual orbs are purg'd from film, and lo!
Instead of ANSTER's turnip-bearing vales,
I see old Fairyland's mirac'lous show,
Her trees of tinsel kiss'd by freakish gales,
Her ouphes, that cloak'd in leaf-gold skim the breeze,
And fairies swarming thick as mites in rotten cheese.

IX.

I see the puny fair-chinn'd goblin rise
Suddenly glorious from his mustard pot;
I see him wave his hand in seemly wise,
And button round him tight his fulgent coat;
While MAGGIE LAUDER, in a great surprise,
Sits startled on her chair, yet fearing not;
I see him ope his dewy lips; I hear
The strange and strict command address'd to MAGGIE's ear.

X.

I see the RANTER with bagpipe on back,
As to the fair he rides jocundly on;
I see the crowds that press with speed not slack
Along each road that leads to ANSTER loan;
I see the suitors, that, deep-sheath'd in sack,
Hobble and tumble, bawl and swear, and groan;
I see—but fie, thou brainish Muse! what mean
These vapourings, and brags of what by thee is seen?

XI.

Go to—be cooler, and in order tell
To all my good co-townsmen list'ning round,
How every merry incident befel,
Whereby our loan shall ever be renown'd;
Say first, what elf or fairy could impel
Fair MAG, with wit, and wealth, and beauty crown'd,
To put her suitors to such waggish test,
And give her happy bed to him that jumped best?

XII.

'Twas on a keen December night, John Frost
Drove through mid air his chariot, icy-wheel'd,
And from the sky's crisp ceiling star-embost,
Whiff'd off the clouds that the pure blue conceal'd;
The hornless moon amid her brilliant host
Shone, and with silver-sheeted lake and field;
'Twas cutting cold; I'm sure, each trav'ler's nose
Was pinch'd right red that night, and numb'd were all his toes.

XIII.

Not so were Maggie Lauder's toes, as she
In her warm chamber at her supper sate,
(For 'twas that hour when burgesses agree
To eat their suppers ere the night grows late).
Alone she sat, and pensive as may be
A young fair lady, wishful of a mate;
Yet with her teeth held now and then a picking,
Her stomach to refresh, the breast-bone of a chicken.

XIV.

She thought upon her suitors, that with love
Besiege her chamber all the livelong day,
Aspiring each her virgin heart to move,
With courtship's every troublesome essay;
Calling her, angel, sweeting, fondling, dove,
And other nicknames in love's friv'lous way;
While she, though their addresses still she heard,
Held back from all her heart, and still no beau preferr'd.

XV.

What, what! quo' MAG, must thus it be my doom
To spend my prime in maidhood's joyless state,
And waste away my sprightly body's bloom
In spouseless solitude without a mate,
Still toying with my suitors, as they come
Cringing in lowly courtship to my gate?
Fool that I am, to live unwed so long!
More fool, since I am woo'd by such a clam'rous throng!

XVI.

For was e'er heiress with much gold in chest,
And dowr'd with acres of wheat-bearing land,
By such a pack of men, in am'rous quest,
Fawningly spaniel'd to bestow her hand?
Where'er I walk, the air that feeds my breast
Is by the gusty sighs of lovers fann'd;
Each wind that blows wafts love-cards to my lap;
Whilst I—ah stupid MAG!—avoid each am'rous trap!

XVII.

Then come, let me my suitors' merits weigh,
And in the worthiest lad my spouse select:—
First, there's our ANSTER merchant, Norman Ray,
A powder'd wight with golden buttons deck'd,
That stinks with scent, and chats like popinjay,
And struts with phiz tremendously erect:
Four brigs has he, that on the broad sea swim;—
He is a pompous fool—I cannot think of him.

XVIII.

Next is the malster Andrew Strang, that takes
His seat i'the Bailie's loft on Sabbath-day,
With paltry visage white as oaten cakes,
As if no blood runs gurgling in his clay;
Heav'ns! what an awkward hunch the fellow makes,
As to the priest he does the bow repay!
Yet he is rich—a very wealthy man, true—
But, by the holy rood, I will have none of Andrew.

XIX.

Then for the Lairds—there's Melvil of Carnbee,
A handsome gallant, and a beau of spirit;
Who can go down the dance so well as he?
And who can fiddle with such manly merit?
—Ay, but he is too much the debauchee—
His cheeks seem sponges oozing port and claret;
In marrying him I should bestow myself ill,
And so, I'll not have you, thou fuddler, Harry Melvil!

XX.

There's Cunningham of Barns, that still assails
With verse and billet-doux my gentle heart,
A bookish squire, and good at telling tales,
That rhimes and whines of Cupid, flame, and dart;
But, oh! his mouth a sorry smell exhales,
And on his nose sprouts horribly the wart;
What though there be a fund of lore and fun in him?
He has a rotten breath—I cannot think of Cunningham.

XXI.

Why then, there's Allardyce, that plies his suit
And battery of courtship more and more;
Spruce Lochmalonie, that with booted foot
Each morning wears the threshold of my door;
Auchmoutie too, and Bruce that persecute
My tender heart with am'rous buffets sore:—
—Whom to my hand and bed should I promote?—
—Eh-la! what sight is this?—what ails my mustard-pot?

XXII.

Here broke the lady her soliloquy ;
For in a twink her pot of mustard, lo!
Self-moved, like Jove's wheel'd stool that rolls on high,
'Gan caper on her table to and fro,
And hopp'd and fidgeted before her eye,
Spontaneous, here and there, a wondrous show:
As leaps, instinct with mercury, a bladder,
So leaps the mustard-pot of bonnie MAGGIE LAUDER.

XXIII.

Soon stopp'd its dance th' ignoble utensil,
When from its round and small recess there came
Thin curling wreaths of paly smoke, that still,
Fed by some magic unapparent flame,
Mount to the chamber's stucco'd roof, and fill
Each nook with fragrance, and refresh the dame:
Ne'er smelt a Phœnix-nest so sweet, I wot,
As smelt the luscious fumes of MAGGIE's mustard-pot.

XXIV.

It reeked censer-like; then, strange to tell!
Forth from the smoke, that thick and thicker grows,
A fairy of the height of half an ell,
In dwarfish pomp, majestically rose:
His feet, upon the table 'stablish'd well,
Stood trim and splendid in their snake-skin hose;
Gleam'd topaz-like, the breeches he had on,
Whose waistband like the bend of summer rainbow
shone.

XXV.

His coat seem'd fashion'd of the threads of gold,
That intertwine the clouds at sun-set hour,
And, certes, Iris with her shuttle bold
Wove the rich garment in her lofty bower;
To form its buttons were the Pleiads old
Pluck'd from their sockets, sure by genie-power,
And sew'd upon the coat's resplendent hem;
Its neck was lovely green, each cuff a sapphire gem.

XXVI.

As when the churlish spirit of the Cape
  To Gama, voyaging to Mozambique,
Up-popp'd from sea, a tangle-tassel'd * shape,
  With mussels sticking inch-thick on his cheek,
And 'gan with tortoise-shell his limbs to scrape,
  And yawn'd his monstrous blobberlips to speak;
Brave Gama's hairs stood bristled at the sight,
And on the tarry deck sunk down his men with fright.

XXVII.

So sudden (not so huge and grimly dire)
  Uprose to MAGGIE's stounded eyne the sprite,
As fair a fairy as you could desire,
  With ruddy cheek, and chin and temples white;
His eyes seem'd little points of sparkling fire,
  That, as he look'd, charm'd with inviting light;
He was, indeed as bonny a fay and brisk,
As e'er on long moon-beam was seen to ride and frisk.

* *Tangle-tassel'd*, hung round with tangle (sea-weed) as with tassels. I observe tangle in Bailey's Dict. though not in Johnson's.

XXVIII.

Around his bosom, by a silken zone,
A little bagpipe gracefully was bound,
Whose pipes like hollow stalks of silver shone,
The glist'ring tiny avenues of sound;
Beneath his arm the windy bag, full-blown,
Heav'd up its purple like an orange round,
And only waited orders to discharge
Its blasts with charming groan into the sky at large.

XXIX.

He wav'd his hand to MAGGIE, as she sat
Amaz'd and startled on her carved chair;
Then took his petty feather-garnish'd hat
In honour to the Lady, from his hair,
And made a bow so dignifiedly flat,
That MAG was witched with his beauish air:
At last he spoke, with voice so soft, so kind,
So sweet, as if his throat with fiddle-strings was lin'd.—

XXX.

Lady! be not offended that I dare,
Thus forward and impertinently rude,
Emerge, uncall'd, into the upper air,
Intruding on a maiden's solitude;
Nay, do not be alarm'd, thou Lady fair!
Why startle so?—I am a fairy good;
Not one of those that, envying beauteous maids,
Speckle their skins with moles, and fill with spleens their heads.

XXXI.

For, as conceal'd in this clay-house of mine,
I overheard thee in a lowly voice,
Weighing thy lovers' merits, with design
Now on the worthiest lad to fix thy choice,
I have up-bolted from my paltry shrine,
To give thee, sweet-ey'd lass, my best advice;
For by the life of Oberon my king!
To pick good husband out is, sure, a ticklish thing.

XXXII.

And never shall good Tommy Puck permit
  Such an assemblage of unwonted charms
To cool some lecher's lewd licentious fit,
  And sleep imbounded by his boisterous arms:
What though his fields by twenty ploughs be split,
  And golden wheat wave riches on his farms?
His house is shame—it cannot, shall not be;
A greater, happier doom, O MAG, awaiteth thee.

XXXIII.

Strange are indeed the steps, by which thou must
  Thy glory's happy eminence attain;
But fate hath fix'd them, and 'tis fate's t'adjust
  The mighty links that ends to means enchain;
Nor may poor Puck his little fingers thrust
  Into the links to break Jove's steel in twain:
Then, MAGGIE, hear, and let my words descend
Into thy soul, for much it boots thee to attend.

XXXIV.

To-morrow, when o'er th' Isle of May the sun
Lifts up his forehead bright with golden crown,
Call to thine house the light-heel'd men, that run
Afar on messages for ANSTER TOWN,
Fellows of sp'rit, by none in speed out-done,
Of lofty voice, enough a drum to drown,
And bid them hie, post-haste, through all the nation,
And publish, far and near, this famous proclamation:

XXXV.

Let them proclaim, with voice's loudest tone,
That on your next approaching market-day,
Shall merry sports be held in ANSTER loan,
With celebration notable and gay;
And that a prize, than gold or costly stone
More precious, shall the victor's toils repay,
Ev'n thy own form with beauties so replete,
—Nay, MAGGIE, start not thus!—thy marriage-bed, my sweet.

XXXVI.

First, on the loan shall ride full many an ass,
With stout whip-wielding rider on his back,
Intent with twinkling hoof to pelt the grass,
And pricking up his long ears at the crack;
Next o'er the ground the daring men shall pass,
Half-coffin'd in their cumbrances of sack,
With heads just peeping from their shrines of bag,
Horribly hobbling round, and straining hard for MAG.

XXXVII.

Then shall the pipers groaningly begin
In squeaking rivalry their merry strain,
Till Billyness shall echo back the din,
And Innergelly woods shall ring again;
Last, let each man that hopes thy hand to win
By witty product of prolific brain,
Approach, and, confident of Pallas' aid,
Claim by an hum'rous tale possession of thy bed.

XXXVIII.

Such are the wondrous tests, by which, my love!
The merits of thy husband must be try'd,
And he that shall in these superior prove,
(One proper husband shall the Fates provide)
Shall from the loan with thee triumphant move
Homeward, the jolly bridegroom and the bride,
And at thy house shall eat the marriage-feast,
When I'll pop up again:—Here Tommy Puck surceast.

XXXIX.

He ceas'd, and to his wee mouth, dewy-wet,
His bagpipe's tube of silver up he held,
And, underneath his down-press'd arm he set
His purple bag, that with a tempest swell'd;
He play'd and pip'd so sweet, that never yet
Mag had a piper heard that Puck excell'd;
Had Midas heard a tune so exquisite,
By heav'n! his long base ears had quiver'd with delight.

XL.

Tingle the fire-ir'ns, poker, tongs, and grate,
Responsive to the blithesome melody;
The tables and the chairs inanimate
Wish they had muscles now to trip it high;
Wave back and forwards at a wondrous rate,
The window-curtains, touch'd with sympathy;
Fork, knife, and trencher, almost break their sloth,
And caper on their ends upon the table-cloth.

XLI.

How then could MAGGIE, sprightly, smart, and young,
Withstand that bagpipe's blithe awak'ning air?
She, as her ear-drum caught the sounds, up-sprung
Like lightning, and despis'd her idle chair,
And into all the dance's graces flung
The bounding members of her body fair;
From nook to nook through all her room she tript,
And whirl'd like whirligig, and reel'd, and bobb'd, and skipt.

XLII.

At last the little piper ceas'd to play,
And deftly bow'd, and said, "My dear, goodnight;"
Then in a smoke evanish'd clean away,
With all his gaudy apparatus bright;
As breaks soap-bubble, which a boy in play
Blows from his short tobacco-pipe aright,
So broke poor Puck from view, and on the spot
Y-smoking aloes-reek he left his mustard-pot.

XLIII.

Whereat the furious Lady's wriggling feet
Forgot to patter in such pelting wise,
And down she gladly sunk upon her seat,
Fatigu'd and panting from her exercise;
She sat, and mus'd a while, as it was meet,
On what so late had occupy'd her eyes;
Then to her bed-room went, and doff'd her gown,
And laid upon her couch her charming person down.

XLIV.

Some say that MAGGIE slept so sound that night,
As never she had slept since she was born;
But sure am I, that, thoughtful of the sprite,
She twenty times upon her bed did turn;
For still appear'd to stand before her sight
The gaudy goblin, glorious from his urn,
And still, within the cavern of her ear,
Th' injunction echoing rung, so strict and strange to hear.

XLV.

But when the silver harness'd steeds, that draw
The car of morning up th' empyreal height,
Had snorted day upon North-Berwick Law,
And from their glist'ring loose manes toss'd the light,
Immediately from bed she rose, (such awe
Of Tommy press'd her soul with anxious weight,)
And donn'd her tissued fragrant morning vest,
And to fulfil his charge her earliest care addrest.

XLVI.

Straight to her house she tarried not to call
  Her messengers and heralds swift of foot,
Men skill'd to hop o'er dikes and ditches; all
  Gifted with sturdy brazen lungs to boot;
She bade them halt at every town, and bawl
  Her proclamation out with mighty bruit,
Inviting loud, to ANSTER loan and FAIR,
The Scottish beau to jump for her sweet person there.

XLVII.

They took each man his staff into his hand;
  They button'd round their bellies close their coats;
They flew divided through the frozen land;
  Were never seen such swiftly-trav'lling Scots!
Nor ford, slough, mountain, could their speed withstand;
  Such fleetness have the men that feed on oats!
They skirr'd, they flounder'd through the sleets and
    snows,
And puff'd against the winds, that bit in spite each nose.

XLVIII.

They halted at each wall-fenc'd town renown'd,
And ev'ry lesser borough of the nation;
And with the trumpet's welkin-rifting sound,
And tuck of drum of loud reverberation,
Tow'rds the four wings of heav'n, they, round and round,
Proclaim'd in Stentor-like vociferation,
That, on th' approaching day of Anster market,
Should merry sports be held:—Hush! listen now and hark it!—

XLIX.

"Ho! beau and pipers, wits and jumpers, ho
Ye buxom blades that like to kiss the lasses;
Ye that are skill'd sew'd up in sacks to go;
Ye that excel in *horsemanship* of asses;
Ye that are smart at telling tales, and know
On Rhime's two stilts to crutch it up Parnassus;
Ho! lads, your sacks, pipes, asses, tales, prepare
To jump, play, ride, and rhime, at Anster loan and Fair!

L.

" First, on the green turf shall each ass draw nigh,
Caparison'd or clouted for the race,
With mounted rider, sedulous to ply
Cudgel or whip, and win the foremost place;
Next, shall th' adventrous men, that dare to try
Their bodies' springiness in hempen case,
Put on their bags, and, with ridic'lous bound,
And sweat and huge turmoil, pass lab'ring o'er the ground.

LI.

" Then shall the pipers, gentlemen o'the drone,
Their pipes in gleesome competition screw,
And grace, with loud solemnity of groan,
Each his invented tune to th' audience new;
Last shall each witty bard, to whom is known
The craft of Helicon's rhime-jingling crew,
His story tell in good poetic strains,
And make his learned tongue the midwife to his brains.

LII.

"And he whose tongue the wittiest tale shall tell,
Whose bagpipe shall the sweetest tune resound,
Whose heels, tho' clogg'd with sack, shall jump it well,
Whose ass shall foot with fleetest hoof the ground,
He who from all the rest shall bear the bell,
With victory in every trial crown'd,
He (mark it, lads!) to MAGGIE LAUDER'S house
That self same night shall go, and take her for his spouse."—

LIII.

Here ceas'd the criers of the sturdy lungs;
But here the gossip Fame, (whose body's pores
Are nought but open ears and babbling tongues,
That gape and wriggle on her hide in scores),
Began to jabber o'er each city's throngs,
Blaz'ning the news through all the Scottish shores;
Nor had she blabb'd, methinks, so stoutly, since
Queen Dido's peace was broke by Troy's love-truant Prince.

LIV.

In every Lowland vale and Highland glen,
She nois'd th' approaching fun of ANSTER FAIR;
Ev'n when in sleep were laid the sons of men,
Snoring away on good chaff beds their care,
You might have heard her faintly murm'ring then,
For lack of audience, to the midnight air,
That from Fife's East Nook up to farthest Stornoway,
Fair MAGGIE's loud report most rapidly was borne away.

LV.

And soon the mortals, that design to strive
By meritorious jumping for the prize,
Train up their bodies, ere the day arrive,
To th' lumpish sack-encumber'd exercise;
You might have seen no less than four or five
Hobbling in each town-loan in awkward guise;
E'en little boys, when from the school let out,
Mimick'd the bigger beaux, and leap'd in pokes about.

LVI.

Through cots and granges with industrious foot,
By laird and knight were light-heel'd asses sought,
So that no ass of any great repute,
For twenty Scots marks could have then been bought;
Nor e'er, before or since, the long-ear'd brute
Was such a goodly acquisition thought.
The pipers vex'd their ears and pipes, t'invent
Some tune that might the taste of ANSTER MAG content.

LVII.

Each poet, too, whose lore-manured brain
Is hot of soil, and sprouts up mushroom wit,
Ponder'd his noddle into extreme pain
T' excogitate some story nice and fit:
When rack'd had been his scull some hours in vain,
He, to relax his mind a little bit,
Plung'd deep into a sack his precious body,
And school'd it for the race, and hopp'd around his study.

LVIII.

Such was the sore preparatory care
  Of all th' ambitious that for April sigh:
Nor sigh the young alone for ANSTER FAIR;
  Old men and wives, erewhile content to die,
Who hardly can forsake their easy-chair,
  To take, abroad, farewell of sun and sky,
With new desire of life now glowing, pray,
That they may just o'erlive our famous market-day.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO II.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO II.

I.

LAST night I dream'd, that to my dark bedside
  Came, white with rays, the poet of the "Quhair,"
And drew my curtain silently aside,
  And stood and smil'd, majestically fair;
He to my finger then a ring apply'd,
  (It glitter'd like Aurora's yellow hair,)
And gave his royal head a pleasant wag,
And said, Go on, my boy, and celebrate thy MAG!

II.

The sun, upcharioting from Capricorn,
Had 'tween the Ram's horns thrust his gilded nose;
And now his bright fist drops, each April morn,
O'er hill and dale, the daisy and the rose;
Wantons the lewd Earth with the god unshorn,
And from her womb the infant verdure throws,
Whilst he, good paramour! leaves Tithys' valley,
Each morn by five o'clock, with her to sport and dally.

III.

Old Kelly-law, the kindly nurse of sheep,
Puts on her daisy-tissued gown of green;
On all her slopes so verdurous and steep,
The bleating children of the flock are seen;
While with a heart where mirth and pleasure keep
Their dwelling, and with honest brow serene,
The shepherd eyes his flock in mood of glee,
And wakes with oaten pipe the echoes of Carnbee.

IV.

And see how Airdrie woods upshoot on high
  Their leafy living glories to the day,
As if they long'd t' embrace the vaulty sky
  With their long branchy arms so green and gay!
Balcarras-craig, so rough, and hard, and dry,
  Enliven'd into beauty by the ray,
Heaves up, bedeck'd with flow'rs, his ruffian-side,
Like giant hung with gawds, and boasts his tricksy pride.

V.

Ev'n on the King's-muir jigs the jolly Spring,
  Scattering from whin to whin the new perfume;
While, near the sea-coast, Flora tarrying,
  Touches the garden's parterres into bloom;
With joy the villages and cities ring;
  Cowherd and cow rejoice, and horse and groom;
The ploughman laughs amid his joyous care;
And ANSTER burghers laugh in prospect of their Fair.

VI.

For lo! now peeping just above the vast
  Vault of the German Sea, in east afar,
Appears full many a brig's and schooner's mast,
  Their topsails strutting with the vernal harr;*
Near and more near they come, and show at last
  Their ocean-thumping hulks all black with tar;
Their stems are pointed toward ANSTER pier,
While, flying o'er their sterns, the well-known flags appear.

VII.

From clear-sky'd France and muddy Zuyder-zee,
  They come, replenish'd with the stores of trade;
Some from the Hollander of lumpish knee
  Convey his lintseed, stow'd in bag or cade;
Heav'n bless him! may his breeches countless be;
  And warm and thick, and ever undecay'd!
For he it was that first supply'd the Scots
With linen for their sarks, and stout frieze for their coats.

* The *harr* is the name given by the fishermen to that gentle breeze, which generally blows from the east in a fine spring or summer afternoon.

VIII.

Some bring, in many an anker hooped strong,
From Flushing's port, the palate-biting gin,
Th' inspirer of the tavern's noisy song,
The top-delight, the nectar of each inn,
That sends a-bounding through the veins along
The loit'ring blood when frosty days begin,
The bev'rage wherein fiddlers like to nuzzle,
The gauger's joy to *seize*, and old wife's joy to guzzle!

IX.

Some from Garonne and bonny banks of Seine,
Transport in pipes the blood of Bacchus' berry,
Wherewith our lairds may fume the fuddled brain,
And grow, by bousing, boisterously merry;
And whereby, too, their cheeks a glow may gain,
Abashing ev'n the red of July's cherry;
O, it is right; our lairds do well, I ween;
A bottle of black wine is worth all Hippocrene!

X.

Soon, hurry'd forward by the skittish gales,
In ANSTER harbour every vessel moors;
Furl'd by the seamen are the flapping sails;
Fix'd are the halsers to the folk-clad shores;
Their holds discharge the wealth of Gallia's vales,
And Amsterdam's and Flushing's useful stores,
All to augment, with commerce' various ware,
The bustle and the trade of famous ANSTER Fair.

XI.

Nor distant now the day; the cream-fac'd sun,*
That, rising, shall engild to-morrow's air,
Shall shine with courteous beams upon the fun
And frolic of the celebrated Fair;
And now, already, have the folk begun,
(So eager are they the delight to share,)
In flocks to MAGGIE's borough to resort,
That they may all, betimes, be present at the sport.

* Anster Lintseed Market (as it is called) is on the 11th of April, or on one of the six days immediately succeeding.

XII.

Each hedge-lin'd high-way of the king, that leads
    Or straightly or obliquely to the loan,
Seems, as the Muse looks downwards, pav'd with heads,
    And hats and cowls of those that bustle on;
From Johnny Groat's house to the border-meads,
    From isle of Arran to the mouth of Don,
In thousands puffingly to Fife they run,
Gold in their pockets lodg'd, and in their noddles fun.

XIII.

Say, Muse, who first, who last, on foot or steed
    Came candidates for MAGGIE to her town?
St Andrew's sprightly students first proceed,
    Clad in their foppery of sleeveless gown;
Forth whistling from Salvador's gate they speed
    Full many a mettlesome and fiery lown,
Forgetting Horace for a while and Tully,
And mad t'embag their limbs, and leap it beautifully.

XIV.

For ev'n in Learning's cobweb'd halls had rung
The loud report of MAGGIE LAUDER's fame,
And Pedantry's Greek-conning sapient tongue
In songs had wagg'd, in honour of her name;
Up from their mouldy books and tasks had sprung
Bigent and Magistrand to try the game;
Prelections ceas'd; old Alma Mater slept,
And o'er his silent rooms the ghost of Wardlaw wept.

XV.

So down in troops the red-clad students come
As kittens blithe, a joke-exchanging crew,
And in their heads bear learned Greece and Rome,
And haply Cyprus in their bodies too;
Some on their journey pipe and play; and some
Talk long of MAG, how fair she was to view,
And as they talk (ay me! so much the sadder,)
Backwards they scale the steps of honest Plato's ladder.*

* The Student wishing to understand this Ladder, may consult Plato. Conviv. tom. iii. page 211, of Serrani's Edit.

XVI.

Others, their heels of weariness to cheat,
Repeated tales of classic merriment,
How the fool Faunus, on his noiseless feet,
At midnight to the cave of Tmolus went,
Scorch'd as he was with Venus' fiercest heat,
On cuckold-making mischievous intent,
Till from the horny fist of hairy Hercules,
He got upon the cheek a most confounded jerk, alas!

XVII.

Nor come they only down; in chaise or gig
Th' endoctrin'd sage professors lolling ride,
Their heads with curl'd vastidity of wig
Thatch'd round and round, and queerly beautify'd;
In silken hose is sheath'd each learned leg;
White are their cravats, long and trimly ty'd:
Some say they came to jump for MAGGIE too,
But college-records say they came the sport to view.

XVIII.

See, as their coachwheels scour the Eastburn-lane,
  Rattling as if the pavement up to tear!
How men and women, huddling in their train,
  And hallooing shouts of loud applause appear!
Red-cheek'd, and white-cheek'd, stout and feeble men,
  With staff or staff-less, draw to ANSTER near;
And such a mob come trampling o'er King's-muir,
They raise a cloud of dust that does the sun obscure.

XIX.

Next from Deninos, every house and hut,
  Her simple guileless people hie away;
That day the doors of parish-school were shut,
  And every scholar got his leave to play:
Down rush they light of heart and light of foot,
  Big plowmen, in their coats of hodden gray,
Weavers despising now both web and treadle,
Collier and collier's wife, and minister and beadle.

XX.

Next, from the well-air'd ancient town of Crail,
Go out her craftsmen with tumultuous din,
Her wind-bleach'd fishers, sturdy-limb'd and hale,
Her in-kneed tailors, garrulous and thin;
And some are flush'd with horns of pithy ale,
And some are fierce with drams of smuggled gin,
While, to augment his drowth, each to his jaws
A good Crail capon * holds, at which he rugs and gnaws.

XXI.

And from Kingsbarns and hamlet † clep'd of boars,
And farms around (their names too long to add)
Sally the villagers and hinds in scores,
Tenant and laird, and hedger, hodden-clad:
Bolted are all the East-nook houses' doors;
Ev'n toothless wives pass westward, strangely glad,
Propping their trem'lous limbs on oaken stay,
And in their red plaids drest as if 'twere Sabbath day.

* A *Crail capon* is a dried haddoc. † Boarhills.

XXII.

And bare-foot lasses, on whose ruddy face
  Unfurl'd is health's rejoicing banner seen,
Trick'd in their Sunday mutches edg'd with lace,
  Tippets of white, and frocks of red and green,
Come tripping o'er the roads with jocund pace,
  Gay as May-morning, tidy, gim, and clean,
Whilst, joggling at each wench's side, her joe
Crack's many a rustic joke, his pow'r of wit to show.

XXIII.

Then jostling forward on the western road,
  Approach the folk of wind-swept Pittenweem,
So num'rous that the highways, long and broad,
  One waving field of gowns and coat-tails seem;
The fat man puffing goes, oppress'd with load
  Of cumb'rous flesh and corpulence extreme;
The lean man bounds along, and with his toes
Smites on the fat man's heels, that slow before him goes.

XXIV.

St Monance, Elie, and adjacent farms,
Turn their mechanics, fishers, farmers out;
Sun-burnt and shoeless schoolboys rush in swarms,
With childish trick, and revelry and shout;
Mothers bear little children in their arms,
Attended by their giggling daughters stout;
Clowns, coblers, cotters, tanners, weavers, beaux,
Hurry and hop along in clusters and in rows.

XXV.

And every husbandman, round Largo-law,
Hath scrap'd his huge-wheel'd dung-cart fair and clean,
Wherein, on sacks stuff'd full of oaten straw,
Sits the Goodwife, Tam, Katey, Jock, and Jean;
In flow'rs and ribbands drest the horses draw
Stoutly their creaking cumbersome machine,
As, on his cart-head, sits the Goodman proud,
And cheerily cracks his whip, and whistles clear and loud.

XXVI.

Then from her coal-pits Dysart vomits forth
  Her subterranean men of colour dun,
Poor human mouldwarps! doom'd to scrape in earth,
  Cimmerian people, strangers to the sun;
Gloomy as soot, with faces grim and swarth,
  They march, most sourly leering every one,
Yet very keen, at Anster loan, to share
The merriments and sports to be accomplish'd there.

XXVII.

Nor did Path-head detain her wrangling race
  Of weavers, toiling at their looms for bread;
For now their slippery shuttles rest a space
  From flying through their labyrinths of thread;
Their treadle-shaking feet now scour apace
  Through Gallowtown with levity of tread;
So on they pass, with sack in hand, full bent
To try their sinews' strength in dire experiment.

XXVIII.

And long Kirkaldy, from each dirty street
  Her num'rous population eastward throws;
Her roguish boys with bare unstocking'd feet,
  Her rich ship-owners, gen'rous and jocose,
Her prosp'rous merchants, sober and discreet,
  Her coxcombs pantaloon'd, and powder'd beaux;
Her pretty lasses tripping on their great toes,
With foreheads white as milk, or any boil'd potatoes.

XXIX.

And from Kinghorn jump hastily along
  Her ferrymen and poor inhabitants:—
And th' upland * hamlet, where, as told in song,
  Tam Lutar play'd of yore his lively rants,
Is left dispeopled of her brose-fed throng,
  For eastward scud they now as thick as ants:
Dunfermline, too, so fam'd for checks and ticks,
Sends out her loom-bred men, with bags and walking-sticks.

* Leslie.

XXX.

And market-maids, and apron'd wives, that bring
 Their gingerbread in baskets to the FAIR;
And cadgers with their creels, that hang by string
 From their lean horse-ribs, rubbing off the hair;
And crook-legg'd cripples, that on crutches swing
 Their shabby persons with a noble air;
And fiddlers with their fiddles in their cases,
And packmen with their packs of ribbons, gauze, and
 laces.

XXXI.

And from Kinross, whose dusty streets unpav'd
 Are whirl'd through heav'n on summer's windy day,
Whose plats of cabbage-bearing ground are lav'd
 By Leven's waves, that clear as crystal play,
Jog her brisk burghers, spruce and cleanly shav'd,
 Her sullen cutlers and her weavers gay,
Her ploughboys in their botch'd and clumsy jackets,
Her clowns with cobbled shoon stuck full of iron
 tackets.

XXXII.

Next ride on sleek-man'd horses bay or brown,
  Smacking their whips and spurring bloodily,
The writers of industrious Cupar town,
  Good social mortals skill'd the pen to ply;
Lo! how their garments as they gallop down,
  Waving behind them in the breezes fly;
As upward spurn'd to heav'n's blue bending roof,
Dash'd is the dusty road from every bounding hoof.

XXXIII.

And clerks with ruffled shirts and frizzled hairs,
  Their tassel'd half-boots clear as looking-glass,
And Sheriffs learn'd, and unlearn'd Sheriff-mairs,
  And messengers-at-arms, with brows of brass,
Come strutting down, or single or in pairs,
  Some on high horse and some on lowly ass;
With blacksmiths, barbers, butchers, and their brats,
And some had new hats on, and some came wanting hats.

XXXIV.

Astraddle on their proud steeds full of fire,
  From all the tree-girt country-seats around,
Comes many a huffy, many a kindly squire,
  In showy garb, worth many a silver pound;
While close behind, in livery's base attire,
  Follows poor lackey with small-bellied hound,
Carrying, upon his shoulders slung, the bag
Wherein his master means to risk his neck for MAG.

XXXV.

From all her lanes and alleys, fair Dundee
  Has sent her happy citizens away;
They come with mickle jolliment and glee,
  Crossing in clumsy boat their shallow Tay;
Their heads are bonneted most fair to see,
  And of the tartan is their back's array:
From Perth, Dunkeld, from Brechin, Forfar, Glams,
Roll down the sweaty crowds, with wearied legs and
    hams.

XXXVI.

And from the Mearn-shire, and from Aberdeen,
 Where knit by many a wench is many a stocking,
From Banff and Murray, where of old were seen
 The witches by the chief so fain to grow king,
Descend in neckless coats brush'd smooth and clean,
 And eke with long pipes in their mouths a-smoking;
The northern people, boisterous and rough,
Bearing both chin and nose bedaub'd with spilth of
 snuff.

XXXVII.

Comes next from Ross-shire and from Sutherland
 The horny-knuckled kilted Highlandman:
From where upon the rocky Caithness strand
 Breaks the long wave that at the Pole began,
And where Lochfyne from her prolific sand
 Her herrings gives to feed each bord'ring clan,
Arrive the brogue-shod men of gen'rous eye,
Plaided, and breechless all, with Esau's hairy thigh.

XXXVIII.

They come not now to fire the Lowland stacks,
Or foray on the banks of Fortha's firth;
Claymore, and broad-sword, and Lochaber-axe,
Are left to rust above the smoky hearth;
Their only arms are bagpipes now and sacks;
Their teeth are set most desp'rately for mirth;
And at their broad and sturdy backs are hung
Great wallets, cramm'd with cheese and bannocks, and
cold tongue.

XXXIX.

Nor staid away the Islanders, that lie
To buffet of th' Atlantic surge expos'd;
From Jura, Arran, Barra, Uist, and Skye,
Piping they come, unshav'd, unbreech'd, unhos'd;
And from that Isle, whose abbey, structur'd high,
Within its precincts holds dead kings enclos'd,
Where St Columba oft is seen to waddle
Gown'd round with flaming fire upon the spire astraddle.

XL.

Next from the far-fam'd ancient town of Ayr,
(Sweet Ayr! with crops of ruddy damsels blest,
That, shooting up, and waxing fat and fair,
Shine on thy braes the lilies of the west);
And from Dumfries, and from Kilmarnock (where
Are night-caps made, the cheapest and the best,)
Blithely they ride on ass and mule, with sacks
In lieu of saddles plac'd upon their asses' backs.

XLI.

Close at their heels, bestriding well-trapp'd nag,
Or humbly riding asses' backbone bare,
Come Glasgow's merchants, each with money-bag,
To purchase Dutch lintseed at ANSTER FAIR;
Sagacious fellows all, who well may brag
Of virtuous industry and talents rare;
Th' accomplish'd men o'the counting-room confest,
And fit to crack a joke, or argue with the best.

XLII.

Nor keep their homes the Borderers, that stay
  Where purls the Jed, and Esk, and little Liddel,
Men, that can rarely on the bagpipe play,
  And wake th' unsober spirit of the fiddle;
Avow'd free-booters, that have many a day
  Stol'n sheep and cow, yet never own'd they did ill;
Great rogues, for sure that wight is but a rogue,
That blots the eighth command from Moses' decalogue.

XLIII.

And some of them in sloop of tarry side,
  Come from North-Berwick harbour sailing out;
Others, abhorrent of the sick'ning tide,
  Have ta'en the road by Stirling brig about,
And eastward now from long Kirkcaldy ride,
  Slugging on their slow-gaited asses stout,
While, dangling, at their backs are bagpipes hung,
And, dangling, hangs a tale on ev'ry rhimer's tongue.

XLIV.

Amid them rides, on lofty ass sublime,
 With cadger-like sobriety of canter,
In purple lustihood of youthful prime,
 Great in his future glory, Rob the Ranter;
(I give the man what name in little time
 He shall acquire from pipe and drone and chanter;)
He comes apparell'd like a trim bridegroom,
Fiery and flush'd with hope, and like a god in bloom.

XLV.

No paltry vagrant piper-carle is he,
 Whose base-brib'd drone whiffs out its wind for hire,
Who, having stroll'd all day for penny fee,
 Couches at night with oxen in the byre;
Rob is a Border laird of good degree,
 A many-acred, clever, jolly squire,
One born and shap'd to shine and make a figure,
And bless'd with supple limbs to jump with wondrous vigour.

XLVI.

His waggish face, that speaks a soul jocose,
  Seems t'have been cast i'the mould of fun and glee,
And on the bridge of his well-arched nose
  Sits Laughter plum'd, and white-wing'd Jollity;
His manly chest a breadth heroic shows;
  Bold is his gesture, dignified and free;
Ev'n as he smites with lash his ass's hip,
'Tis with a seemly grace he whirls his glitt'ring whip.

XLVII.

His coat is of the flashy Lincoln green,
  With silver buttons of the prettiest mould;
Each buttonhole and skirt and hem is seen
  Sparkishly edg'd with lace of yellow gold;
His breeches of the velvet smooth and clean,
  Are very fair and goodly to behold;
So on he rides, and let him e'en ride on,
We shall again meet Rob, to-morrow at the loan.

XLVIII.

But mark his ass ere off he ride;—some say,
He got him from a pilgrim lady fair,
Who, landing once on Joppa's wave-worn quay,
Had bought him of Armenian merchant there,
And prest his padded pack, and rode away
To snuff devotion in with Syria's air;
Then brought him home in hold of stout Levanter,*
All for the great good luck of honest Rob the Ranter.

XLIX.

Along Fife's western roads, behold, how hie
The travel-sweltry crowds to Anster loan,
Shaded, o'erhead, with clouds of dust that fly
Tarnishing heav'n with darkness not its own!
And scarcely can the Muse's lynx-sharp eye
Sçan, through the dusty nuisance upward blown,
The ruddy plaids, black hats, and bonnets blue,
Of those that rush below, a motley-vestur'd crew!

* Ship trading to and from the Levant, so called by seamen.

L.

Nor only was the land with crowds oppreſt,
  That trample forward to th' expected Fair;
The harass'd ocean had no peace or rest,
  So many keels her foamy bosom tear;
For, into view, now sailing from the west,
  With streamers idling in the bluish air,
Appear the painted pleasure-boats unleaky,
Charg'd with a precious freight,—the good folks of
    Auld Reekie.

LI.

They come, the cream and flow'r of all the Scots,
  The children of politeness, science, wit,
Exulting in their bench'd and gaudy boats,
  Wherein some joking and some puking sit;
Proudly the pageantry of carvels floats,
  As if the salt sea frisk'd to carry it;
The gales vie emulous their sails to wag,
And dally as in love with each long gilded flag.

LII.

Upon the benches seated, I descry
  Her gentry; knights, and lairds, and long-nail'd fops;
Her advocates and signet-writers sly;
  Her gen'rous merchants, faithful to their shops;
Her lean-cheek'd tetchy critics, who, O fy!
  Hard-retching, spue upon the sails and ropes;
Her lovely ladies, with their lips like rubies;
Her fiddlers, fuddlers, fools, bards, blockheads, black-
    guards, boobies.

LIII.

And red-prow'd fisher-boats afar are spy'd
  In south-east, tilting o'er the jasper main,
Whose wing-like oars, dispread on either side,
  Now swoop on sea, now rise in sky again:
They come not now, with herring-nets supply'd,
  Or barbed lines to twitch the haddock train,
But with the townsfolk of Dunbar are laden,
Who burn to see the FAIR,—man, stripling, wife and
    maiden.

LIV.

And many a Dane, with ringlets long and red,
And many a starv'd Norwegian, lank and brown,
(For over seas the fame of MAG had spread
Afar from Scandinavian town to town,)
Maugre the risk of drowning, and the dread
Of *krakens*, isles of fish of droll renown,
Have dar'd to cross the ocean, and now steer
Their long outlandish skiffs direct on ANSTER pier.

LV.

Forward they scud; and soon each pleasure-barge,
And fisher-boats, and skiffs so slim and lax,
On shore their various passengers discharge,
Some hungry, queasy some and white as flax;
Lightly they bound upon the beach's verge,
Glad to unbend their stiffen'd houghs and backs:
But who is that, O Muse, with lofty brow,
That from his lacker'd boat is just forth-stepping now?

LVI.

Thou fool! (for I have ne'er since Bavius' days
  Had such a dolt to dictate to as thou,)
Dost thou not know, by that eye's kingly rays,
  And by the arch of that celestial brow,
And by the grace his ev'ry step displays,
  And by the crowds that round him duck and bow,
That that is good King James, the merriest Monarch
That ever sceptre sway'd since Noah steer'd his own
    ark?

LVII.

For, as he in his house of Holyrood
  Of late was keeping jovially his court,
The gipsey Fame beside his window stood,
  And hollow'd in his ear fair MAG's report:
The Monarch laugh'd, for to his gamesome mood
  Accorded well th' anticipated sport;
So here he comes with lord and lady near,
Stepping with regal stride up ANSTER's eastern pier.

LVIII.

But mark you, boy, how in a loyal ring
(As does obedient subjects well become)
Fife's hospitable lairds salute their King,
And kiss his little finger or his thumb;
That done, their liege lord they escorting bring
To Anster House,* that he may eat a crumb;
Where in the stucco'd hall they sit and dine,
And into tenfold joy bedrench their blood with wine.

LIX.

Some with the ladies in the chambers ply
Their bounding elasticity of heel,
Evolving, as they trip it whirlingly,
The merry mazes of th' entangled reel;
'Tween roof and floor, they fling, they flirt, they fly,
Their garments swimming round them as they wheel;
The rafters creak beneath the dance's clatter;
Tremble the solid walls with feet that shake and patter.

* Anster House was destroyed to its foundation in 1811.

LX.

Some (wiser they,) resolv'd on drinking-bout,
The wines of good Sir John englut amain;
Their glasses soon are fill'd, and soon drunk out,
And soon are bumper'd to the brim again:
Certes that laird is but a foolish lout,
Who does not fuddle now with might and main;
For gen'rous is their host, and, by my sooth,
Was never better wine apply'd to Scottish mouth.

LXI.

With might and main they fuddle and carouse;
Each glass augments their thirst, and keens their wit;
They swill, they swig, they take a hearty rouse,
Cheering their flesh with Bacchus' benefit,
Till, by and bye, the windows of the house
Go dizzily whirling round them where they sit;
And had you seen the sport, and heard the laughing,
You'd thought that all Jove's gods in ANSTER House sat quaffing.

LXII.

Not such a wassail, fam'd for social glee,
In Shushan's gardens long ago was held,
When Ahasuerus, by a blithe decree,
His turban'd satraps to the bouse compell'd,
And bagg'd their Persian paunches with a sea
Of wine, that from his carved gold they swill'd,
Whilst overhead was stretch'd (a gorgeous show!)
Blue blankets, silver-starr'd, a heav'n of callico!

LXIII.

Nor less is the disport and joy without,
In Anster town and loan, through all the throng:
'Tis but one vast tumultuous jovial rout,
Tumult of laughing, and of gabbling strong;
Thousands and tens of thousands reel about,
With joyous uproar blustering along;
Elbows push boringly on sides with pain,
Wives hustling come on wives, and men dash hard on men.

LXIV.

There lacks no sport:—tumblers, in wondrous pranks,
High-stag'd, display their limbs' agility;
And now, they, mountant from the scaffold's planks,
Kick with their whirling heels the clouds on high,
And now, like cat, upon their dextrous shanks,
They light, and of new monsters cheat the sky;
Whilst motley Merry-Andrew, with his jokes,
Wide through th' incorp'rate mob the bursting laugh provokes.

LXV.

Others upon the green, in open air,
Enact the best of Davie Lindsay's plays;
While ballad-singing women do not spare
Their throats, to give good utt'rance to their lays;
And many a leather-lung'd co-chanting pair
Of wood-legg'd sailors, children's laugh and gaze,
Lift to the courts of Jove their voices loud,
Y-hymning their mishaps, to please the heedless crowd.

LXVI.

Meanwhile the sun, fatigued, (as well he may,)
  With shining on a night till seven o'clock,
Beams on each chimney-head a farewell ray,
  Illuming into golden shaft its smoke;
And now in sea, far west from Oronsay,
  Is dipp'd his chariot-wheel's refulgent spoke,
And now a section of his face appears,
And, diving, now he ducks clean down o'er head and
    ears.

LXVII.

Anon uprises, with blithe bagpipe's sound,
  And shriller din of flying fiddlestick,
On the green loan and meadow-crofts around,
  A town of tents, with blankets roofed quick:
A thousand stakes are rooted in the ground;
  A thousand hammers clank and clatter thick;
A thousand fiddles squeak and squeal it yare;
A thousand stormy drones out-gasp in groans their air.

LXVIII.

And such a turbulence of gen'ral mirth
Rises from ANSTER loan upon the sky,
That from his throne Jove starts, and down on earth
Looks, wond'ring what may be the jollity:
He roots his eye on shores of Forthan firth,
And smerks, as knowing well the market nigh,
And bids his gods and goddesses look down,
To mark the rage of joy that maddens ANSTER town.

LXIX.

From Cellardyke to wind-swept Pittenweem,
And from Balhouffie to Kilrennymill,
Vaulted with blankets, crofts and meadows seem,
So many tents the grassy spaces fill;
Meantime the Moon, yet leaning on the stream,
With fluid silver bathes the welkin chill,
That now Earth's half-ball, on the side of night,
Swims in an argent sea of beautiful moonlight.

LXX.

Then to his bed full many a man retires,
On plume, or chaff, or straw, to get a nap,
In houses, tents, in haylofts, stables, byres,
And or without, or with, a warm night-cap:
Yet sleep not all; for by the social fires
Sit many, cuddling round their toddy-sap,
And ever and anon they eat a lunch,
And rinse the mouthfuls down with flav'rous whisky punch.

LXXI.

Some, shuffling paper nothings, keenly read
The Devil's maxims in his painted books,
Till the old serpent in each heart and head
Spits canker, and with wormwood sours their looks:
Some o'er the chess-board's chequer'd champain lead
Their inch-tall bishops, kings, and queens, and rooks;
Some force, t' inclose the Tod, the wooden Lamb on;
Some shake the pelting dice upon the broad backgammon.

LXXII.

Others of travell'd elegance polite,
With mingling music MAGGIE's house surround,
And serenade her all the live-long night,
With song and lyre, and flutes' enchanting sound,
Chiming and hymning into fond delight
The heavy night air that o'ershades the ground;
While she, right pensive, in her chamber-nook
Sits pond'ring on th' advice of little Tommy Puck.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO III.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO III.

I.

I WISH I had a cottage snug and neat
  Upon the top of many-fountain'd Ide,
That I might thence in holy fervour greet
  The bright-gown'd Morning tripping up her side;
And when the low Sun's glory-buskin'd feet
  Walk on the blue wave of th' Ægean tide,
O, I would kneel me down, and worship there
The God who garnish'd out a world so bright and fair!

II.

The saffron-elbow'd Morning up the slope
  Of heav'n canaries in her jewell'd shoes,
And throws o'er Kelly-law's sheep-nibbled top
  Her golden apron dripping kindly dews;
And never, since she first began to hop
  Up Heav'n's blue causeway, of her beams profuse,
Shone there a dawn so glorious and so gay,
As shines the merry dawn of ANSTER Market-day.

III.

Round through the vast circumference of sky
  One speck of small cloud cannot eye behold,
Save in the East some fleeces bright of die,
  That stripe the hem of heav'n with woolly gold,
Whereon are happy angels wont to lie
  Lolling, in amaranthine flow'rs enroll'd,
That they may spy the precious light of God,
Flung from the blessed East o'er the fair Earth abroad.

IV.

The fair Earth laughs through all her boundless range,
Heaving her green hills high to greet the beam;
City and village, steeple, cot, and grange,
Gilt as with Nature's purest leaf-gold seem;
The heaths and upland muirs, and fallows, change
Their barren brown into a ruddy gleam,
And, on ten thousand dew-bent leaves and sprays,
Twinkle ten thousand suns, and fling their petty rays.

V.

Up from their nests and fields of tender corn
Full merrily the little sky-larks spring,
And on their dew-bedabbled pinions borne,
Mount to the heav'n's blue key-stone flickering:
They turn their plume-soft bosoms to the morn,
And hail the genial light, and cheerly sing;
Echo the gladsome hills and valleys round,
As half the bells of Fife ring loud and swell the sound.

VI.

For when the first up-sloping ray was flung
  On ANSTER steeple's swallow-harb'ring top,
Its bell and all the bells around were rung
  Sonorous, jangling loud without a stop;
For toilingly each bitter beadle swung,
  Ev'n till he smok'd with sweat, his greasy rope,
And almost broke his bell-wheel, ush'ring in
The morn of ANSTER FAIR, with tinkle-tankling din.

VII.

And, from our steeple's pinnacle out-spread,
  The town's long colours flare and flap on high,
Whose anchor, blazon'd fair in green and red,
  Curls, pliant to each breeze that whistles by;
Whilst, on the boltsprit, stern, and topmast-head,
  Of brig and sloop that in the harbour lie,
Streams the red gaudery of flags in air,
All to salute and grace the morn of ANSTER FAIR.

VIII.

Forthwith from house and cellar, tent and byre,
  Rous'd by the clink of bells that jingle on,
Uncabin'd, rush the multitude like fire,
  Furious and squeezing forward to the loan;*
The son, impatient, leaves his snail-slow sire;
  The daughter leaves her mam to trot alone;
So madly leap they, man, wife, girl, and boy,
As if the senseless Earth they kick'd for very joy.

IX.

And such the noise of feet that trampling pass,
  And tongues that roar and rap from jaw to jaw,
As if ten thousand chariots, wheel'd with brass,
  Came hurling down the sides of Largo-law;
And such the number of the people was,
  As when in day of Autumn, chill and raw,
His small clouds Eurus sends, a vap'ry train,
Streaming in scatter'd rack, exhaustless, from the main.

* Anster loan must, in those days, have been of great extent: at present its limits are contracted almost to the breadth of the high-way.

X.

For who like arrant slugs can keep their heads
  In contact with their pillows now unstirr'd?
Grandfathers leave their all-year-rumpled beds,
  With moth-eat breeches now their loins to gird,
And, drawn abroad on tumbrils and on sleds,
  Chat off their years, and sing like vernal bird;
Men, whom cold agues into leanness freeze,
Imblanketed walk out, and snuff the kindly breeze.

XI.

And flea-bit wives, on whose old arms and cheeks
  The spoiler Time hath driv'n his furrowing plough,
Whose cold dry bones have all the winter weeks
  Hung, shiv'ring o'er their chimney's peat-fed glow,
Now warm and flexible, and lithe as leeks,
  Wabbingly walk to see the joyous show;
What wonder? when each brick and pavement-stone
Wish'd it had feet that day to walk to ANSTER Loan.

XII.

Upon a little dappled nag, whose mane
  Seem'd to have robb'd the steeds of Phaeton,
Whose bit, and pad, and fairly-fashion'd rein,
  With silvery adornments richly shone,
Came Maggie Lauder forth, enwheel'd with train
  Of knights and lairds around her trotting on:
At James' right hand she rode, a beauteous Bride,
That well deserv'd to go by haughtiest Monarch's side.

XIII.

Her form was as the Morning's blithesome star,
  That, capp'd with lustrous coronet of beams,
Rides up the dawning orient in her car,
  New-wash'd, and doubly fulgent from the streams;
The Chaldee shepherd eyes her light afar,
  And on his knees adores her as she gleams:
So shone the stately form of Maggie Lauder,
And so th' admiring crowds pay homage, and applaud
    her.

XIV.

Each little step her trampling palfrey took
 Shak'd her majestic person into grace,
And, as at times, his glossy sides she strook
 Endearingly with whip's green silken lace,
(The prancer seem'd to court such kind rebuke,
 Loit'ring with wilful tardiness of pace);
By Jove, the very waving of her arm
Had pow'r a brutish lout t' unbrutify and charm!

XV.

Her face was as the summer cloud, whereon
 The dawning sun delights to rest his rays;
Compar'd with it, old Sharon's vale, o'ergrown
 With flaunting roses, had resign'd its praise;
For why? Her face with Heav'n's own roses shone,
 Mocking the morn, and witching men to gaze;
And he that gaz'd with cold unsmitten soul,
That blockhead's heart was ice thrice bak'd beneath the
 pole.

XVI.

Her locks, apparent tufts of wiry gold,
Lay on her lily temples, fairly dangling,
And on each hair, so harmless to behold,
A lover's soul hung mercilessly strangling;
The piping silly zephyrs vied t' infold
The tresses in their arms so slim and tangling,
And thrid in sport these lover-noosing snares,
And play'd at hide-and-seek amid the golden hairs.

XVII.

Her eye was as an honour'd palace, where
A choir of lightsome Graces frisk and dance;
What object drew her gaze, how mean so e'er,
Got dignity and honour from the glance;
Woe to the man on whom she unaware
Did the dear witch'ry of her eye elance!
'Twas such a thrilling, killing, keen regard—
May Heav'n from such a look preserve each tender bard!

XVIII.

Beneath its shading tucker heav'd a breast
Fashion'd to take with ravishment mankind;
For never did the flimsy Coan vest
Hide such a bosom in its gauze of wind;
Ev'n a pure angel, looking, had confest
A sinless transport passing o'er his mind;
For, in the nicest turning-loom of Jove,
Turn'd were these charming hills, t' inspire a holy love.

XIX.

So on she rode in virgin majesty,
Charming the thin dead air to kiss her lips,
And with the light and grandeur of her eye
Shaming the proud sun into dim eclipse;
While, round her presence clust'ring far and nigh,
On horseback some, with silver spurs and whips,
And some afoot with shoes of dazzling buckles,
Attended knights, and lairds, and clowns with horny knuckles.

XX.

Not with such crowd surrounded, nor so fair
In form, rode forth Semiramis of old,
On chariot where she sat in iv'ry chair,
Beneath a sky of carbuncle and gold,
When to Euphrates' banks to take the air,
Or her new rising brickwalls to behold,
Abroad she drove, whilst round her wheels were pour'd
Satrap, and turban'd squire, and pursy Chaldee lord.

XXI.

Soon to the Loan came MAG, and from her pad
Dismounting with a queen-like dignity,
(So from his buoyant cloud, man's heart to glad,
Lights a bright angel on a hill-top high,)
On a small mound, with turfy greenness clad
She lit, and walk'd enchantment on the eye;
Then on two chairs, that on its top stood ready,
Down sat the good King James, and ANSTER's bonny
Lady.

XXII.

Their chairs were finely carv'd, and overlaid
With the thin lustre of adorning gold,
And o'er their heads a canopy was spread
Of arras, flower'd with figures manifold,
Supported by four boys, of silver made,
Whose glitt'ring hands the vault of cloth uphold;
On each side sat or stood, to view the sport,
Stout lord, and lady fair, the flow'r of Scotland's court.

XXIII.

On their gilt chairs they scarce had time to sit,
When uprose, sudden, from th' applauding mob,
A shout enough to startle hell, and split
The roundness of the granite-ribbed globe;
The mews of May's steep islet, terror-smit,
Clang'd correspondent in a shrill hubbub,
And had the Moon then hung above the main,
Crack'd had that horrid shout her spotted orb in twain.

5

XXIV.

Thrice did their shouting make a little pause,
That so their lungs might draw recruiting air,
Thrice did the stormy tumult of applause
Shake the Fife woods, and fright the foxes there;
Sky rattled, and Kilbrachmont's crows and daws,
Alarm'd, sung hoarsely o'er their callow care:
O never, sure, in Fife's town-girdled shire,
Was heard, before or since, a shout so loud and dire!

XXV.

Nor ceas'd th' acclaim when ceas'd the sound of voice,
For fiddlesticks, in myriads, bick'ring fast,
Shriek'd on their shrunken guts a shrilling noise;
And pipe, and drone, with whistle, and with blast,
Consorted, humm'd and squeak'd, and swell'd the joys
With furious harmony too high to last;
And such a hum of pipe and drone was there,*
As if on earth men pip'd, and devils dron'd in air.

* Such a yell was there,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air. SCOTT'S *Marmion.*

XXVI.

Thus did the crowd with fiddle, lungs and drone,
 Congratulate fair MAGGIE and their King,
Till at the last, wide-spreading round the Loan,
 They form'd of huge circumference a ring,
Inclosing green space, bare of bush and stone,
 Where might the asses run, and suitors spring;
Upon its southmost end, high chair'd were seen
The Monarch and the Dame, and overlook'd the green.

XXVII.

Anon, the King's stout trumpet blew aloud,
 Silence imposing on the rabble's roar;
Silent as summer sky stood all the crowd;
 Each bag was strangled and could snort no more;
(So sinks the roaring of the foamy flood,
 When Neptune's clarion twangs from shore to shore,)
Then through his trump he bawl'd with such a stress,
One might have known his words a mile beyond Crawness.—

XXVIII.

"Ho! hark ye, merry mortals! hark ye, ho!
The King now speaks, nor what he speaks is vain;
This day's amount of bus'ness well ye know,
So what ye know I will not tell again:
He hopes your asses are more swift than doe;
He hopes your sacks are strong as iron chain;
He hopes your bags and pipes are swoln and screw'd;
He hopes your rhime-cramm'd brains are in a famous mood.

XXIX.

"For, verily, in ANSTER's beauteous Dame
Awaits the victor no despis'd reward;
Sith well she merits that the starry frame
Should drop Apollo on that grassy sward,
That so he might, by clever jumping, claim
A fairer Daphne than whom once he marr'd;
So fair is MAG: yet, not her charms alone,
A present from the King shall be the victor's own:

XXX.

"For as a dow'r, along with MAGGIE's hand,
The Monarch shall the conqueror present
With ten score acres of the royal land,
All good of soil, and of the highest rent;
Near where Dunfermline's palace-turrets stand,
They stretch, array'd in wheat, their green extent:
With such a gift the King shall crown to-day
The gen'rous toils of him who bears the prize away.

XXXI.

"And he, prize-blest, shall enter MAGGIE's door,
Who shall in all the trials victor be;
Or, if there hap no victor in the four,
He who shall shine and conquer in the three;
But, should sly fortune give to two or more,
An equal chance in equal victory,
'Tis MAG's of these to choose the dearest beau:—
So bring your asses in, bring in your asses, ho!"—

XXXII.

Scarce from his clam'rous brass the words were blown,
When from the globe of people issued out
Donkeys in dozens, and in scores, that shone
In purple some, and some in plainer clout,
With many a wag astraddle plac'd thereon,
Green-coated knight, and laird, and clumsy lout,
That one and all came burning with ambition,
To try their asses' speed in awkward competition.

XXXIII.

And some sat wielding silver-headed whips,
Whisking their asses' ears with silken thong;
Some thrash'd and thwack'd their sturdy hairy hips,
With knotted cudgels ponderous and strong;
And some had spurs, whose every rowel dips
Amid their ribs an inch of iron long;
And some had bridles gay and bits of gold,
And some had hempen reins, most shabby to behold.

XXXIV.

Amid them enter'd, on the listed space,
Great ROB (the RANTER was his after name,)
With Fun's broad ensign hoisted in his face,
And aug'ring to himself immortal fame;
And aye, upon the hillock's loftier place,
Where sat his destin'd spouse, the blooming Dame,
A glance he flung, regardless of the reins,
And felt the rapid love glide tingling through his veins.

XXXV.

She, too, upon the Bord'rer's manly size
With prepossessing favour fix'd her sight;
For woman's sharp and well-observing eyes
Soon single out the seemliest, stateliest wight;
And, oh! (she to herself thus silent sighs,)
Were't but the will of Puck the dapper sprite,
I could—La! what a grace of form divine!—
I could, in sooth, submit to lose my name in thine!

XXXVI.

Forward they rode, to where the King and MAG
O'erlook'd, superior, from the southern mound,
When, from his brute alighting every wag,
His person hunch'd into a bow profound,
And almost kiss'd his shoes' bedusted tag,
Grazing with nose most loyally the ground,
As earthward crook'd they their corporeal frames
Into obeisance due, before the gracious James.

XXXVII.

"Rise, rise, my lads, the jovial Monarch said,
Here is not now the fitting place to ply
The courtier's and the dancing-master's trade,
Nuzzling the nasty ground obsequiously;
Up, up—put hat and bonnet upon head—
The chilling dew still drizzles from the sky;
Up—tuck your coats succinct around your bellies;
Mount, mount your asses' backs like clever vaulting
fellows.

XXXVIII.

"And see, that, when the race's sign is given,
Each rider whirl his whip with swingeing might,
Or toss his whizzing cudgel up to heav'n,
That with more goodly bang it down may light;
And let the spur's blood-thirsty teeth be driven
Through hide and hair by either heel aright,
For 'tis a beast most sluggish, sour, and slow;—
Be mounting then, my hearts, and range ye in a row:

XXXIX.

"And look ye northwards—note yon mastlike pole
Tassel'd with ribbons and betrimm'd with clout,
Yon—mark it—is the race-ground's northern goal,
Where you must turn your asses' heads about,
And jerk them southward, till with gladsome soul
You reach that spot whence now you're setting out;
And he that reaches first, shall loud be shouted
The happy, happy man—I'll say no more about it."—

XL.

This said, they like the glimpse of lightning quick,
  Upvaulted on their backbones asinine,
And marshal'd, by the force of spur and stick,
  The long-ear'd lubbards in an even line:
Then sat, awaiting that momentous nick
  When James's herald should y-twang the sign:
Each whip was rear'd aloft in act to crack,
Each cudgel hung in sky surcharg'd with stormy
    thwack.

XLI.

Frisk'd with impatient flutter every heart
  As the brisk anxious blood began to jump;
Each human ear prick'd up its fleshiest part,
  To catch the earliest notice of the trump;
When hark! with blast that spoke the sign to start,
  The brass-ton'd clarion gave the air a thump,
Whoop—off they go—halloo—they shoot—they fly—
They spur—they whip—they crack—they bawl—they
    curse—they cry.—

XLII.

A hundred whips, high toss'd in ether, sung
Tempestuous, flirting up and down like fire;
'Tween sky and earth as many cudgels swung
Their gnarled lengths in formidable gyre,
And, hissing, from their farther ends down flung
A storm of wooden bangs and anguish dire;
Woe to the beastly ribs, and sculls, and backs,
Foredoom'd to bear the weight of such unwieldy cracks!

XLIII.

Woe to the beastly bowels, doom'd, alas!
To bear the spur's sharp steely agony;
For through the sore-gall'd hides of every ass
Squirts the vext blood in gush of scarlet die,
While as they slug along the hoof-crush'd grass,
Rises a bray so horrid and so high,
As if all Bashan's bulls, with fat o'ergrown,
Had bellow'd on the green of ANSTER's frighted Loan.

XLIV.

Who can in silly pithless words paint well
The pithy feats of that laborious race?
Who can the cudgellings and whippings tell,
The hurry, emulation, joy, disgrace?
'Twould take for tongue the clapper of a bell,
To speak the total wonders of the chace;
'Twould need a set of sturdy brassy lungs,
To tell the mangled whips, and shatter'd sticks and rungs.

XLV.

Each rider pushes on to be the first,
Nor has he now an eye to look behind;
One ass trots smartly on, though like to burst
With bounding blood, and scantiness of wind;
Another, by his master bann'd and curs'd,
Goes backward through perversity of mind,
Inching along in motion retrograde,
Contrarious to the course which Scotland's Monarch bade.

XLVI.

A third obdurate stands and cudgel-proof,
And stedfast as th' unchissel'd rock of flint,
Regardless though the heaven's high marble roof
Should fall upon his scull with mortal dint,
Or though, conspiring Earth, beneath his hoof,
Should sprout up coal with fiery flashes in't,
Whilst on his back his griev'd and waspish master,
The stubborner he stands, still bangs and bans the faster.

XLVII.

Meantime, the rabblement, with fav'ring shout,
And clapping hand, set up so loud a din,
As almost with stark terror frighted out
Each ass's soul from his partic'lar skin;
Rattled the bursts of laughter round about;
Grinn'd every phiz with mirth's peculiar grin;
As through the loan they saw the cuddies awkward
Bustling some straight, some thwart, some forward, and some backward.

XLVIII.

As when the clouds, by gusty whirlwind riven,
And whipp'd into confusion pitchy-black,
Detach'd, fly diverse round the cope of heaven,
Reeling and jostling in uncertain rack,
And some are northward, some are southward driven,
With storm embroiling all the zodiac,
Till the clash'd clouds send out the fiery flash,
And peals, with awful roll, the long loud thunder crash.

XLIX.

Just in such foul confusion and alarm
Jostle the cuddies with rebellious mind,
All drench'd with sweat, internally so warm,
They loudly bray before, and belch behind:
But who is yon, the foremost of the swarm,
That scampers fleetly as the rain-raw wind?
'Tis Robert Scott, if I can trust my eyne;
I know the Bord'rer well, by his long coat of green.

L.

See how his bright whip, brandish'd round his head,
Flickers like streamer in the northern skies;
See how his ass on earth with nimble tread
Half-flying rides, in air half-riding flies,
As if a pair of ostrich wings, out-spread,
To help him on, had sprouted from his thighs:
Well scamper'd, Rob—well whipt—well spurr'd—my boy;
O haste ye, Ranter, haste—rush—gallop to thy joy!

LI.

The pole is gain'd; his ass's head he turns
Southward, to tread the trodden ground again;
Sparkles like flint the cuddy's hoof and burns,
Seeming to leave a smoke upon the plain;
His bitted mouth the foam impatient churns;
Sweeps his broad tail behind him like a train:
Speed, cuddy, speed—O, slacken not thy pace;
Ten minutes more like this, and thou shalt gain the race!

LII.

He comes careering on the sounding Loan,
With pace unslacken'd hast'ning to the knoll,
And, as he meets with those that hobble on
With northward heads to gain the ribbon'd pole,
Ev'n by his forceful fury are o'erthrown
His long-ear'd brethren in confusion droll;
For as their sides, he passing, slightly grazes,
By that collision shock'd, down roll the founder'd asses.

LIII.

Heels over head they tumble; ass on ass
They dash, and twenty times roll o'er and o'er,
Lubberly wallowing along the grass,
In beastly ruin and with beastly roar;
While their vext riders in poor plight, alas!
Flung from their saddles three long ells and more,
Bruis'd and commingled, with their cuddies sprawl,
Cursing th' impetuous brute, whose conflict caus'd their fall.

LIV.

With hats upon their heads they down did light,
  Withouten hats disgracefully they rose;
Clean were their faces ere they fell and bright,
  But dirty-fac'd they got up on their toes;
Strong were their sinews ere they fell and tight,
  Hip-shot they stood up, sprain'd with many woes;
Blithe were their aspects ere the ground they took,
Grim louring rose they up, with crabbed ghastful look.

LV.

And, to augment their sorrow and their shame,
  A hail abhorr'd of nauseous rotten eggs,
In rascal volleys from the rabble came
  Opprobrious, on their bellies, heads and legs,
Smearing with slime that ill their clothes became,
  Whereby they stunk like wash-polluted pigs,
For in each sputt'ring shell a juice was found,
Foul as the dribbling pus of Philoctetes' wound.

LVI.

Ah ! then with grievous limp along the ground,
  They sought their hats that had so flown away,
And some were, cuff'd and much disaster'd, found,
  And haply some not found unto this day :
Meanwhile, with vast and undiminish'd bound,
  Sheer through the bestial wreck and disarray,
The brute of Mesopotam hurries on,
And in his madding speed devours the trembling Loan.

LVII.

Speed, cuddy, speed—one short, short minute more,
  And finish'd is thy toil, and won the race—
Now—one half minute and thy toils are o'er—
  His toils are o'er, and he has gain'd the base !
He shakes his tail, the conscious conqueror ;
  Joy peeps through his stupidity of face ;
He seems to wait the Monarch's approbation,
As quiver his long ears with self-congratulation.

LVIII.

Straight from the stirrup Rob dislodg'd his feet,
 And, flinging from his grasp away the rein,
Off sprung, and louting in obeisance meet,
 Did lowly duty to his King again:
His King with salutation kind did greet
 Him the victorious champion of the plain,
And bade him rise, and up the hillock skip,
That he the royal hand might kiss with favour'd lip.

LIX.

Whereat, obedient to the high command,
 Great Robert Scott, upbolting from the ground,
Rush'd up, in majesty of gesture grand,
 To where the Monarch sat upon the mound,
And kiss'd the hard back of his hairy hand,
 Respectfully, as fits a Monarch crown'd;
But with a keener ecstacy he kiss'd
The dearer tend'rer back of Maggie's downy fist.

LX.

Then took the trumpeter his clarion good,
And, in a sharp and violent exclaim,
Out from the brass among the multitude,
Afar sent conqu'ring Rob's illustrious name;
Which heard, an outcry of applause ensued,
That shook the dank dew from the starry frame;
Great Robert's name was halloo'd through the mob,
And Echo blabb'd to heav'n the name of mighty Rob.

LXI.

But, unapplauded, and in piteous case,
The laggers on their vanquish'd asses slow,
Shame-stung, with scurvy length of rueful face,
Ride sneaking off to save them further woe;
For, cramm'd with slime and stench and vile disgrace,
Th' abominable shells fly moe and moe,
Till slink the men amid the press of folk,
Secure from shame, and slime, and egg's unwholesome yolk.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO IV.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO IV.

I.

THERE are who say, (the devil pinch them for it!)
  That I am but a silly poetaster,
A trencher-licker in Apollo's court,
  A sorry boy, an arrant paper-waster;
The louts! I'll make them mend their bad report,
  Or on their mouths will clap a pitchy plaster;
Ye blockheads, read my ass-race, and avow it,
That I'm Homeric stuff—ay, every inch a poet.

II.

Again, the herald at the King's desire,
His tube of metal to his mouth apply'd,
And, with a roysting brazen clangour dire,
Round to the heaving mass of rabble cry'd,
Inviting every blade of fun and fire,
That wish'd to jump in hempen bondage ty'd,
Forthwith to start forth from the people's ring,
And fetch his sack in hand, and stand before the King.

III.

No sooner in the sky his words were blown,
Than through the multitude's compacted press,
Wedging their bodies, push to th' open Loan
Th' audacious men of boasted springiness;
Some, Sampson-thigh'd, and large and big of bone,
Brawn-burden'd, six feet high or little less,
Some, lean, flesh-wither'd, stinted, oatmeal things,
Yet hardy, tough, and smart, with heels like steely springs.

IV.

Nor were the offer'd candidates a few;
  In hundreds forth they issue, mad with zeal
To try, in feats which haply some shall rue,
  Their perilous alacrity of heel;
Each mortal brings his sack wherein to mew
  As in a pliant prison, strong as steel,
His guiltless corse, and clog his nat'ral gait
With cumbrance of cloth, embarrassing and strait.

V.

And in their hands they hold to view on high
  Vain-gloriously, their bags of sturdy thread,
And toss and wave them in th' affronted sky,
  Like honour-winning trophies o'er their head,
Assuming merit, that they dare defy
  The dangers of a race so droll and dread:
Ah, boast not, sirs, for premature's the brag;
'Tis time in troth to boast when off you put the bag!

VI.

Onward they hasten'd, clamorous and loud,
To where the Monarch sat upon the knoll,
And, having to his presence humbly bow'd,
And bar'd of reverential hat their poll,
Their dirty sacks they wagg'd, erect and proud,
Impatient, in their fiery fit of soul,
And pertly shak'd, ev'n in the Monarch's eyes,
A cloud of meal and flour that whirling round them flies.

VII.

But as the good King saw them thus prepar'd
To have their persons scabbarded in cloth,
He order'd twenty soldiers of his guard,
All swashing fellows and of biggest growth,
To step upon the green Loan's listed sward,
That they may lend assistance, nothing lothe,
To plunge into their pliant sheaths, neck-deep,
Th' ambitious men that dare such over vent'rous leap.

VIII.

They stepp'd obedient down, and in a trice
  Put on the suitors' comical array;
Each sack gap'd wide its monstrous orifice,
  To swallow to the neck its living prey;
And, as a swineherd puts in poke a grice
  To carry from its sty some little way,
So did the soldiers plunge the men, within
Their yawning gloomy gulfs, ev'n to the neck and chin.

IX.

As when of yore the Roman forum, split
  By earthquake, yawn'd a black tremendous hole,
Voracious, deep'ning still, though flung in it
  Were stones and trees with all their branches whole,
Till, in a noble patriotic fit,
  The younker Curtius of devoted soul
Down headlong yarely gallop'd, horse and all,
And dash'd his gallant bones to atoms by the fall:

X.

So fearlessly these men of fair Scotland
(Though not to death,) down plung'd into their sacks,
Entoiling into impotence to stand
Their feet, and mobbling legs, and sides, and backs,
Till tightly drawn was every twisted band,
And knotted firmly round their valiant necks,
That, in their rival rage to jump forthright,
They might not struggle off their case of sackcloth tight.

XI.

Nor, when their bodies were accoutred well,
Upon their cumber'd feet stood all upright,
But some, unpractis'd or uncautious, fell
Sousing with lumpish undefended weight,
And roll'd upon the turf full many an ell,
Incapable of uprise, sad in plight;
Till, rais'd again, with those that keep their feet,
Join'd in a line they stand each in his winding-sheet.

XII.

O 'twas an awkward and ridic'lous show,
  To see a long sack-muffled line of men,
With hatless heads all peeping in a row
  Forth from the long smocks that their limbs contain!
For in the wide abyss of cloth below,
  Their legs are swallow'd and their stout arms twain;
From chin to toe one shapeless lump they stand,
In clumsy uniform, without leg, arm, or hand.

XIII.

And such their odd appearance was, and show
  Of human carcasses in sackcloth dight,
As when the trav'ller, when he haps to go
  Down to Grand Cairo in the Turk's despite,
Sees in her chamber'd catacombs below
  Full many a mummy horribly upright,
A grisly row of grimly-garnish'd dead,
That seem to pout, and scowl, and shake the brainless
    head.

XIV.

So queer and so grotesque to view they stood,
All ready at the trump's expected sound,
To take a spring of monstrous altitude,
And scour with majesty of hop the ground:
Yet not so soon the starting-blast ensued;
For, as they stand intent upon the bound,
The hum'rous Monarch, eyeing their array,
Gave then his good advice before they rush'd away.—

XV.

" O friends! since now your loins are girt, he cry'd,
For journey perilous and full of toil,
Behoves it you right cautiously to guide
Your ticklish steps along such vexing soil;
For sorry is the road, and well supply'd
With stumps and stumbling-blocks and pits of guile,
And snares, and latent traps with earth bestown,
To catch you by the heels, and bring you groaning
down.

XVI.

"And woe betide, if unaware you hap
  Your body's well-adjusted poise to lose,
For bloody bump and sorrowful sore slap
  Await your falling temple, brow, and nose;
And, when once down and fetter'd in a trap,
  Hard task 'twill be to extricate your toes:
So, lads, if you regard your nose's weal,
Pray pick out stable steps, and tread with wary heel.

XVII.

"And he that longest time without a fall
  Shall urge his sad perplexity of way,
And leave behind his fellow-trav'llers all,
  Growling for help and grovelling on the clay;
He, for his laudable exertions, shall
  Be sung the second victor of the day:
And so God speed you, sirs!"—The Monarch spoke,
And on the surging air the trumpet's signal broke.

XVIII.

As when a thunderclap, preluding nigh
  A storm, growls on the frontiers of the west,
Ere yet the cloud, slow toiling up the sky,
  Hath in its mass the mid-day sun supprest,
Alarm'd the timid doves that basking lie
  Upon their cot's slope sunny roof at rest,
At once up-flutter in a sudden fray,
And poise th' unsteady wing, and squir in air away:

XIX.

So started, as the herald gave the blast,
  At once the suitors in their sacks away,
With gallant up-spring, notable and vast,
  A neck-endang'ring violent assay:
The solid earth, as up to sky they past,
  Push'd back, seem'd to retire a little way;
And, as they up-flew furious from the ground,
The gash'd and wounded air whizz'd audibly a sound.

XX.

As when on summer eve a soaking rain
  Hath after drought bedrench'd the tender grass,
If chance, in pleasant walk along the plain,
  [illegible]shing with foot the pearl-hung blades you pass,
A troop of frogs oft leaps from field of grain,
  Marshall'd in line, a foul unseemly race,
They halt a space, then vaulting up they fly,
As if they long'd to sit on Iris' bow on high:

XXI.

So leap'd the men, half-sepulchred in sack,
  Up-swinging, with their shapes be-monstring sky,
And cours'd in air a semicircle track,
  Like to the feath'ry-footed Mercury;
Till, spent their impetus, with sounding thwack
  Greeted their heels the green ground sturdily;
And some, descending, kept their balance well,
Unbalanc'd some came down, and boisterously fell.

XXII.

The greeted earth beneath the heavy thwacks
  Of feet that centripetal down alight,
Of tingling elbows, bruised loins and backs,
  Shakes passive, yet indignant of the weight;
For, o'er her bosom, in their plaguy sacks
  Cumbrously roll, (a mortifying sight!),
Wreck'd burgher, knight, and laird, and clown pell-mell,
Prostrate, in grievance hard, too terrible to tell.

XXIII.

And aye they struggle at an effort strong
  To reinstate their feet upon the plain,
Half-elbowing, half-kneeing, sore and long
  Abortively, with bitter sweat and pain,
Till, half uprais'd, they to their forehead's wrong
  Go with a buffet rapping down again,
And sprawl and flounce, and wallow on their backs,
Crying aloud for help t' uncord their dolorous sacks.

XXIV.

Not in severer anguish of distress
The fabled giant under Etna lies,
Though rocks and tree-proud promontories press
With vengeance fitting Jove his ruffian size;
Wallowing supine beneath the mountain's stress,
Half-broil'd with brimstone ever hot, he fries,
And, as he turns his vasty carcass o'er,
Out-belches molten rocks, and groans a hideous roar.

XXV.

In such vexatious plight the mortals lie
That founder'd on the threshold of the race,
Where let us leave them, and lift up our eye
To those that keep their feet, and hop apace.—
Gramercy! how they bounce it lustily,
Maugre their misery of woven case!
How with their luggage scour they o'er the Loan,
And toil, and moil, and strain, and sweat, and lumber on.

XXVI.

Strange thing it is that men so penn'd in clout,
So wound with swaddling-clothes, should trip it so;
See how with spring incomparably stout,
Spurning the nasty earth, they upward go,
As if they wish'd t' unsocket and knock out
With poll the candles that i' the night-sky glow!
See how attain'd the zenith of their leap,
Earthward they sink again with long-descending sweep!

XXVII.

They halt not still; again aloft they hop,
As if they tread the rainbow's gilded bend,
Again upon the quaking turf they drop,
Lighting majestic on their proper end;
I ween, they do not make a moment's stop;
O who may now his precious time misspend?
'Tis bustling all and swelt'ring—but behold!
Swop! there a jumper falls, aflat upon the mould.

XXVIII.

How can his gyved arms be forward thrust
  To break the downsway of his fall just now?
Ah, 'tis his tender nose, alone that must
  In loving-kindness save from bump his brow;
His soft nose, to its site and duty just,
  Is martyr'd to its loyalty, I trow,
For, flatten'd into anguish by the clod,
It weeps—see how it weeps—warm trickling tears of
    blood!

XXIX.

He bleeds, and from his nostrils' double sluice
  Redly bedews the sod of Anster Loan,
Till, in a puddle of his own heart's juice,
  He welt'ring writhes with lamentable moan,
And sends his sack in curses to the deuce,
  Banning the hour when first he put it on:
Meanwhile, o'erlabour'd in their hobbling pother,
Douse, drops a second down, and whap! there sinks
    another!

XXX.

Wearied, half-bursten with their hot turmoil,
Their lungs like Vulcan's bellows panting strong,
Pow'rless to stand, or prosecute their toil,
Successively they souse and roll along,
Till, round and round, the carcass-cumber'd soil
Is strewn with havock of the jumping throng,
That make a vain endeavour off to shuffle
The cruel sackcloth coil, that does their persons muffle.

XXXI.

All in despair have sunk, save yonder two
That still their perpendic'lar posture keep,
The only remnant of the jumping crew,
That urge their emulous persisting leap;
Oddspittkins! how with poise exactly true
Clean forward to the ribbon'd pole they sweep;
I cannot say that one is 'fore the other,
So equal side by side they plod near one another.

XXXII.

The pole is gain'd, and to the glorious sun
They turn their sweaty faces round again;
With inextinguishable rage to run,
Southward unflagging and unquell'd they strain.
What?—Is not yonder face, where young-ey'd Fun
And Laughter seem enthron'd to hold their reign,
One seen before—ev'n ROB the Bord'rer's phiz!—
Aye, now I ken it well, by'r lakin it is his!

XXXIII.

Haste, haste ye, ROB, half-hop, half-run, half-fly,
Wriggle and wrestle in thy bag's despite;
So! shoot like cannon-bullet to the sky;
So!—stably down upon thy soles alight;
Up, up again, and fling it gallantly!—
Well-flung, my ROB, thou art a clever wight;
'Sblood, now thy rival is a step before;
String, string thy sinews up, and jump three yards and more!

XXXIV.

'Tis done—but who is he that at thy side
Thy rival vigorously marches so?
Declare, O Muse, since thou art eagle-ey'd,
And thine it is, ev'n at a glance, to know
Each son of mortal man, though mumm'l and ty'd
In long disguising sack from chin to toe!
" He, boy, that marches in such clumsy state,
Is old Edina's child, a waggish Advocate:

XXXV.

" For he too has for MAGGIE LAUDER dar'd
To prove the mettle of his heel and shin,
A jolly wight, who trickishly prepar'd
A treach'rous sack to scarf his body in;
A sack, whose bottom was with damp impair'd,
Fusty, half-rotten, mouldy, frail, and thin,
That he, unseen, might in the race's p'ther,
Thrust out one helpful leg, and keep incag'd its brother.

XXXVI.

"And seest thou not his right leg peeping out,
 Enfranchis'd, trait'rously to help his gait,
Whilst th' other, still imprison'd in its clout,
 Tardily follows its more active mate?"
I see it well—'tis treachery, no doubt;
 Beshrew thee now, thou crafty Advocate!
Unfair, unfair! 'tis quite unfair, I say,
Thus with illicit leg to prop thy perilous way!

XXXVII.

Half-free, half-clogg'd, he steals his quick advance,
 Nearing at each unlicens'd step the base,
While honest ROBERT plies the hardier dance,
 Most faithful to his sack and to the race;
Now for it, ROB—another jump—but once—
 And overjump'd is all th' allotted space;—
By Jove, they both have reach'd the base together,
Gain'd is the starting-line, yet gain'd the race hath
 neither!

XXXVIII.

At once they bend each man his body's frame
  Into a bow, before the King and MAG;
At once they ope their lips to double-claim
  The race's palm, (for now Auld Reekie's wag,
As snail draws in its horn, had, fy for shame!
  Drawn his dishonest leg into his bag;)
At once they plead the merits of their running,
Good ROB with proofs of force, the wag with quips
    and punning.

XXXIX.

Me lists not now to variegate my song
  With all his sophistry and quip and pun;
O 'twould be tiresome, profitless, and long,
  To quote his futile arguments air-spun,
His oratoric tricks that dress the wrong
  In garb of right, his gybes of naughty fun,
Quiddits and quillits that may well confound one,
And make a rotten sack appear a goodly sound one!

XL.

But Robert to the people's sight appeal'd,
And to the eyes of royal James, and Mag,
Who saw his rival's foot too plain reveal'd,
And impudently peering from its bag:
He said 'twas roguish thus to come a-field
With such a paltry hypocritic rag;
The very hole, through which his foot was thrust,
Gapes evidence to prove his claim was quite unjust.

XLI.

Long was the plea, and longer it had been,
Had not the populace begun aloud
T' express with clamour their resentment keen
At him who quibbled in his rotten shroud:
A thousand hands, uplifted high, were seen
Over the hats and bonnets of the crowd,
With paly hens' eggs that their fingers clench,
To hurl upon his sack conviction, slime, and stench.

XLII.

Which, when he saw all white upheld to view,
 Ready to rattle shame about his ears,
He straightway the perplexing claim withdrew,
 Urg'd to resign by his judicious fears;
For had he but one minute stay'd or two,
 He, for his subtilties, and quirks, and jeers,
Had reap'd a poor and pitiful reward,
And smell'd from head to foot—but not with Syrian nard.

XLIII.

The Monarch, then, well pleas'd that thus the mob
 Had settled with prejudging voice the case,
Orders his trumpeter to blazon Rob,
 Again the winner of the second race:
The fellow blew each cheek into a globe,
 And puff'd into deformity his face,
As to the top of heaven's empyreal frame
He, in a storm of breath, sent up the conqu'ror's name.

XLIV.

His name the rabble took; from tongue to tongue
  Bandi'd it flew like fiery-winged shot,
That the blue atmosphere around them rung
  With the blabb'd honours of great ROBERT SCOTT;
Nor when they thus his triumph stoutly sung,
  Were the race-founder'd gentlemen forgot,
That in their trammels still a-flound'ring lay,
And, had they not been rais'd, had lain there to this day.

XLV.

But soon up-rear'd they were: the lads, that late
  Had help'd their uncouth livery to don,
Now step upon the green compassionate,
  To free them from the house of dole and moan:
The cords, that on their necks were knotted straight,
  Are loos'd, and as they lie extended prone,
Of their long scabbards are discas'd the men,
And stand upon their feet, unclogg'd, and free agen.

XLVI.

They take no time, (such shame the vanquish'd stung,)
Each to snatch up his bag and bring it off;
Away they start, and plunge amid the throng,
Glad their embarrassment of cloth to doff;
(So shoots the serpent to the brake along,
And leaves to rot his cast despised slough;)
Deep in the throng with elbows sharp they bore,
And fear contemptuous laugh and hateful egg no more.

XLVII.

But now the sun, in mid-day's gorgeous state,
Tow'rs on the summit of the lucid sky,
And human stomachs that were cramm'd of late,
Now empty, send their silent dinner-cry,
Demanding something wherewithal to sate
Their hunger, bread and beer, or penny-pie:
The crowd, obedient to the belly's call,
Begin to munch, and eat, and nibble one and all.

XLVIII.

Some from their pockets, or their wallets, drew
Lumps of the roasted flesh of calf or lamb;
Some ply their teeth-arm'd grinding jaws to chew
The tougher slices of the thirsty ham;
Others with bits of green cheese nice and new
Ev'n to the throat their clownish bellies cram,
While horns of ale, from many a barrel fill'd,
Foam white with frothy rage, and soon are swigg'd and swill'd.

XLIX.

JAMES, too, and MAG, and all the courtly train
Of lords and ladies round them not a few,
With sugar'd biscuits sooth'd their stomachs pain,
For courtly stomachs must be humour'd too;
And from their throats to wash the dusty stain
That they had breath'd when from the sacks it flew,
A glass of wine they slipp'd within their clay,
And if they swallow'd twain, the wiser folk were they.

L.

Nor ceas'd the business of the day meanwhile;
For as the Monarch chew'd his sav'ry cake,
The man, whose lungs sustain the trumpet's toil,
Made haste again his noisy tube to take,
And with a cry, which, heard full many a mile,
Caus'd the young crows on Airdrie's trees to quake,
He bade the suitor-pipers to draw nigh,
That they might, round the knoll, their powers of piping try.

LI.

Which, when the rabble heard, with sudden sound
They broke their circle's huge circumference,
And, crushing forward to the southern mound,
They push'd their many-headed shoal immense,
Diffusing to an equal depth around
Their mass of bodies wedg'd compact and dense,
That, standing nigher, they might better hear
The pipers squeaking loud to charm Miss MAGGIE's ear.

LII.

And soon the pipers, shouldering along
  Through the close mob their squeez'd uneasy way,
Stood at the hillock's foot, an eager throng,
  Each asking license from the King to play;
For with a tempest, turbulent and strong,
  Labour'd their bags impatient of delay,
Heaving their bloated globes outrageously,
As if in pangs to give their contents to the sky.

LIII.

And every bag, thus full and tempest-ripe,
  Beneath its arm lay ready to be prest,
And on the holes of each fair-polish'd pipe,
  Each piper's fingers long and white were plac'd:
Fiercely they burn'd in jealous rivalship;
  Each madding piper scoff'd at all the rest,
And fleer'd and toss'd contemptuously his head,
As if his skill alone deserv'd fair MAGGIE's bed.

LIV.

Nor could they wait, so piping-mad they were,
Till James gave each man orders to begin;
But in a moment they displode their air
In one tumultuous and unlicens'd din;
Out-flies, in storm of simultaneous blare,
The whizzing wind comprest their bags within,
And whiffling through the wooden tubes so small,
Growls gladness to be freed from such confining thrall.

LV.

Then rose, in burst of hideous symphony,
Of pibrochs and of tunes one mingled roar;
Discordantly the pipes squeal'd sharp and high,
The drones alone in solemn concord snore;
Five hundred fingers, twinkling funnily,
Play twiddling up and down on hole and bore,
Now passage to the shrilly wind denying,
And now a little rais'd to let it out a-sighing.

LVI.

Then rung the rocks and caves of Billyness,
Reverberating back that concert's sound,
And half the lurking Echoes that possess
The glens and hollows of the Fifan ground;
Their shadowy voices strain'd into excess
Of out-cry, loud huzzaing round and round
To all the Dryads of Pitkirie wood,
That now they round their trees should dance in frisky
mood.

LVII.

As when the sportsman with report of gun,
Alarms the sea-fowl of the Isle of May,
Ten thousand mews and gulls that shade the sun
Come flapping down in terrible dismay,
And with a wild and barb'rous concert stun
His ears, and scream, and shriek, and wheel away;
Scarce can the boatman hear his plashing oar;
Yell caves and eyries all, and rings each Maian shore.

LVIII.

Just so around the knoll did pipe and drone
Whistle and hum a discord strange to hear,
Tort'ring with violence of shriek and groan,
Kingly, and courtly, and plebeian ear;
And still the men had humm'd and whistled on,
Ev'n till each bag had burst its bloated sphere,
Had not the King, uprising, wav'd his hand,
And check'd the boist'rous din of such unmanner'd band.

LIX.

On one side of his face a laugh was seen,
On t'other side a half-form'd frown lay hid;
He frown'd, because they petulantly keen,
Set up their piping forward and unbid:
He laugh'd, for who could have controul'd his mien,
Hearing such crash of pibrochs as he did?
He bade them orderly the strife begin,
And play each man the tune wherewith the fair he'd win.

LX.

Whereat the pipers ceas'd their idle toil
  Of windy music wild and deafening,
And made too late (what they forgot e'erwhile)
  A gen'ral bow to MAGGIE and their King;
But as they vail'd their bare heads tow'rd the soil,
  O then there happ'd a strange portentous thing,
Which had not good my Muse confirm'd for true,
Myself had not believ'd, far less have told to you.

LXI.

For lo! whilst all their bodies yet were bent,
  Breaks from the spotless blue of eastern sky
A globe of fire, (miraculous ostent!)
  Bursten from some celestial cleft on high;
And thrice in circle round the firmament
  Trail'd its long light the gleamy prodigy,
Till on the ring of pipers down it came,
And set their pipes, and drones, and chanters in a flame.

LXII.

'Twas quick and sudden as th' electric shock;
One moment lighted and consum'd them all;
As is the green hair of the tufted oak
Scath'd into blackness by the fulmin'd ball:
Or, as spark-kindled, into fire and smoke,
Flashes and fumes the nitrous grain so small,
So were their bagpipes, in a twink, like tinder
Fir'd underneath their arms, and burn'd into a cinder.

LXIII.

Yet so innocuous was the sky-fall'n flame,
That, save their twangling instruments alone,
Unsing'd their other gear remain'd the same,
Ev'n to the nap that stuck their coats upon;
Nor did they feel it's heat, when down it came
On errand, to destroy pipe, bag, and drone;
But stood in blank surprise, when to the ground
Dropt down in ashes black their furniture of sound.

LXIV.

Crest-fall'n they stood, confounded and distrest,
And fix'd upon the turf their stupid look,
Conscious that Heav'n forbade them to contest
By such a burning token of rebuke.
The rabble, too, its great alarm confest,
For every-face the ruddy blood forsook,
As with their white, uprolling, ghastly eyes
They spy'd the streaky light wheel whizzing from the skies.

LXV.

And still they to that spot of orient Heav'n,
Whence burst the shining globe, look up aghast,
Expecting, when th' empyreal pavement riven,
A second splendour to the earth should cast;
But when they saw no repetition given,
Chang'd from alarm to noisy joy at last,
They set up such a mix'd tremendous shout,
As made the girdling heav'ns to bellow round about.

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LXVI.

And such a crack and peal of laughter rose,
When the poor Pipers bagpipe-less they saw,
As when a flock of jetty-feather'd crows,
On winter morning when the skies are raw,
Come from their woods in long and sooty rows,
And over ANSTER through their hoarse throats caw;
The sleepy old wives, on their warm chaff-beds,
Up from their bolsters rear, afear'd, their flannel'd heads.

LXVII.

Then did th' affronted Pipers slink away,
With faces fix'd on earth for very shame;
For not one remnant of those pipes had they
Wherewith they late so arrogantly came;
But in a black and ashy ruin lay
Their glory moulder'd by the scathing flame;
Yet in their hearts they curs'd, (and what the wonder?),
That fire to which their pipes so quick were giv'n a plunder.

LXVIII.

And scarce they off had slunk, when with a bound
  Great ROBERT SCOTT sprung forth before the King;
For he alone, when all the Pipers round
  Stood rang'd into their fire-devoted ring,
Had kept snug distance from the fated ground,
  As if forewarn'd of that portentous thing;
He stood and laugh'd, as underneath his arm
He held his bagpipe safe, unscath'd with fiery harm.

LXIX.

His hollow drone, with mouth wide-gaping, lay
  Over his shoulder pointing to the sky,
Ready to spue its breath, and puff away
  The lazy silver clouds that sit on high:
His bag swell'd madly to begin the play,
  And with its bowel-wind groan'd inwardly;
Not higher heav'd the wind-bags, which of yore
Ulysses got from him who rul'd th' Æolian shore.

LXX.

He thus the King with reverence bespoke:
  " My liege, since Heav'n with bagpipe-levell'd fire
Hath turn'd my Brethren's gear to dust and smoke,
  And testify'd too glaringly its ire,
It fits me now, as yet my bagpipe's poke
  Remains unsing'd, and every pipe entire,
To play my tune—O King, with your good will—
And to the royal ear to prove my piping skill."

LXXI.

Nodded his liege assent, and straightway bade
  Him stand a-top o' th' hillock at his side;
A-top he stood; and first a bow he made
  To all the crowd that shouted far and wide;
Then, like a Piper dext'rous at his trade,
  His pipes to play adjusted and apply'd;
Each finger rested on its proper bore;
His arm appear'd half-rais'd to wake the bag's uproar.

LXXII.

A space he silent stood, and cast his eye
In meditation upwards to the pole,
As if he pray'd some fairy pow'r in sky
To guide his fingers right o'er bore and hole;
Then pressing down his arm, he gracefully
Awak'd the merry bagpipe's slumb'ring soul,
And pip'd and blew, and play'd so sweet a tune,
As might have well unspher'd the reeling midnight moon.

LXXIII.

His ev'ry finger, to its place assign'd,
Mov'd quiv'ring like the leaf of aspen tree,
Now shutting up the skittish squeaking wind,
Now op'ning to the music passage free;
His cheeks, with windy puffs therein confin'd,
Were swoln into a red rotundity,
As from his lungs into the bag was blown
Supply of needful air to feed the growling drone.

LXXIV.

And such a potent tune did never greet
The drum of human ear with lively strain;
So merry, that from dancing on his feet
No man undeaf could stockishly refrain;
So loud, 'twas heard a dozen miles complete,
Making old Echo pipe and hum again,
So sweet, that all the birds in air that fly,
Charm'd into new delight, come sailing through the sky.

LXXV.

Crow, sparrow, linnet, hawk, and white-wing'd dove,
Wheel in aërial jigg o'er ANSTER loan;
The sea-mews from each Maian cleft and cove
O'er the deep sea come pinion-wafted on;
The light-detesting bats now flap above,
Scaring the sun with wings to day unknown,
Round ROBERT's head they dance, they cry, they sing,
And shear the subtil sky with broad and playful wing.

LXXVI.

And eke the mermaids that in ocean swim,
  Drawn by that music from their shelly caves,
Peep now unbashful from the salt-sea brim,
  And flounce and plash exulting in the waves;
They spread at large the white and floating limb,
  That Neptune amorously clips and laves,
And kem with combs of pearl and coral fair
Their long sleek oozy locks of green redundant hair.

LXXVII.

Nor was its influence less on human ear;
  First from their gilded chairs up-start at once
The royal James and Maggie seated near,
  Enthusiastic both and mad to dance:
Her hand he snatch'd and look'd a merry leer,
  Then caper'd high in wild extravagance,
And on the grassy summit of the knoll,
Wagg'd each monarchial leg in galliard strange and droll.

LXXVIII.

As when a sun-beam, from the waving face
  Of well-fill'd waterpail reflected bright,
Varies upon the chamber-walls its place,
  And, quiv'ring, tries to cheat and foil the sight;
So quick did MAGGIE, with a nimble grace,
  Skip patt'ring to and fro, alert and light,
And, with her noble colleague in the reel,
Haughtily heav'd her arms, and shook the glancing heel.

LXXIX.

The Lords and Ladies next, who sat or stood
  Near to the Piper and the King around,
Smitten with that contagious dancing mood,
  'Gan hand in hand in high lavolt to bound,
And jigg'd it on as featly as they could,
  Circling in sheeny rows the rising ground,
Each sworded Lord a Lady's soft palm griping,
And to his mettle rous'd at such unwonted piping.

LXXX.

Then did th' infectious hopping-mania seize
  The circles of the crowd that stood more near,
Till, round and round, far spreading by degrees,
  It madden'd all the loan to kick and rear;
Men, women, children, lilt and ramp, and squeeze,
  Such fascination takes the gen'ral ear!
Ev'n babes, that at their mothers' bosoms hung,
Their little willing limbs fantastically flung.

LXXXI.

And hoar-hair'd men and wives, whose marrow Age
  Hath from their hollow bones suck'd out and drunk,
Canary in unconscionable rage,
  Nor feel their sinews wither'd now and shrunk;
Pellmell in random couples they engage,
  And boisterously wag feet, arms, and trunk,
As if they strove, in capering so brisk,
To heave their aged knees up to the solar disk.

LXXXII.

And cripples from beneath their shoulders fling
  Their despicable crutches far away,
Then, yok'd with those of stouter limbs, up-spring
  In hobbling merriment, uncouthly gay;
And some on one leg stand y-gamboling;
  For why? The other short and frail had they;
Some, whose both legs distorted were and weak,
Dance on their poor knee-pans in mad prepost'rous freak.

LXXXIII.

So on they trip, King, MAGGIE, Knight, and Earl,
  Green-coated courtier, satin-snooded dame,
Old men and maidens, man, wife, boy, and girl,
  The stiff, the supple, bandy-legg'd, and lame,
All suck'd and rapt into the dance's whirl,
  Inevitably witch'd within the same;
Whilst ROB, far-seen, o'erlooks the huddling loan,
Rejoicing in his pipes, and squeals serenely on.

LXXXIV.

But such a whirling and a din there was,
  Of bodies and of feet that heel'd the ground,
As when the Maelstrom in his craggy jaws
  Engluts the Norway waves with hideous sound;
In vain the black sea-monster plies his paws
  'Gainst the strong eddy that impels him round;
Rack'd and convuls'd, the ingorging surges roar,
And fret their frothy wrath, and reel from shore to
  shore.

LXXXV.

So reel the mob, and with their feet up-cast
  From the tramp'd soil a dry and dusty cloud,
That shades the huddling hurly-burly vast
  From the warm sun as with an earthy shroud;
Else, had the warm sun spy'd them wriggling fast,
  He sure had laugh'd at such bewitched crowd,
For never, since heaven's baldric first he trod,
Tripp'd was such country dance beneath his fiery road.

LXXXVI.

Then was the shepherd, that on Largo-law
  Sat idly whistling to his feeding flock,
Dismay'd, when looking south-eastward he saw
  The dusty cloud more black than furnace-smoke;
He lean'd his ear, and catch'd with trembling awe
  The dance's sounds that th' ambient ether broke;
He bless'd himself, and cry'd, "By sweet St. John!
The devil hath got a job in ANSTER's dirty loan."

LXXXVII.

At length the mighty Piper, honest ROB,
  His wonder-working melody gave o'er,
When on a sudden all the flouncing mob
  Their high commotion ceas'd and toss'd no more;
Trunk, arm, and leg, forgot to shake and bob,
  That bobb'd and shak'd so parlously before;
On ground, fatigu'd, the panting dancers fall,
Wond'ring what witch's craft had thus embroil'd them
    all.

LXXXVIII.

And some cry'd out, that o'er the Piper's head
They had observ'd a little female fay,
Clad in green gown, and purple-striped plaid,
That fed his wind-bag, aidant of the play;
Some, impotent to speak, and almost dead
With jumping, as on earth they sat or lay,
Wip'd from their brows, with napkin, plaid, or gown,
The globes of shining sweat that ooze and trickle down.

LXXXIX.

Nor less with jigg o'erlabour'd and o'erwrought,
Down on their chairs dropt MAGGIE and the King,
Amaz'd what supernat'ral spell had caught
And forc'd their heels into such frolicking;
And much was MAG astonish'd, when she thought
(As sure it was an odd perplexing thing)
That ROBERT's tune was to her ear the same
As what Tom Puck late play'd, when from her pot he came.

XC.

But from that hour, the Monarch and the mob
Gave Maggie Lauder's name to Robert's tune,
And so shall it be call'd, while o'er the globe
Travels the waneing and the crescent moon.
And from that hour the puissant Piper Rob,
Whose bagpipe wak'd so hot a rigadoon,
From his well-manag'd bag, and drone, and chanter,
Obtain'd the glorious name of Mighty Rob the Ranter.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO V.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO V.

I.

O for that pond'rous broomstick, whereon rode
  Grim Beattie Laing,* hors'd daringly sublime!
So would I fly above the solar road,
  To where the Muses sit on high and chime;
Eigh! I would kiss them in their bright abode,
  And from their lips suck Poetry and Rhime;
Till Jove (if such my boldness should displease him)
Cry, "Fy, thou naughty boy! pack off and mount thy besom."

* The famous witch of Pittenweem. See *Satan's Invisible World Discovered.*

II.

It needed not that with a third exclaim,
King JAMES's trumpeter aloud should cry
Through his long alchemy, the famous name
Of him who, piping, got the victory;
For, sooth to tell, man, boy, and girl, and dame,
Him the great Prince of Pipers testify,
Not with huzzas and jabbering of tongues,
But with hard-puffing breasts and dance-o'erweary'd lungs.

III.

And truly had the crier will'd to shout
The doughty Piper's name through polish'd trump,
His breath had not suffic'd to twang it out,
So did the poor man's lights puff, pant, and jump:
Wherefore to rest them from that dancing-bout,
A while they sat or lay on back or rump,
Gulping with open mouths and nostrils wide
The pure refreshing waves of Jove's aërial tide.

IV.

But, unfatigued, upon the hillock's crown
  Stood Rob, as if his lungs had spent no breath,
And look'd with conscious exultation down
  Upon the dance's havock wide beneath,
Laughing to see th' encumber'd plain bestrown
  With people whirl'd and wriggled nigh to death;
Erelong he thus addrest, with reverent air,
The King that, breathless yet, sat puffing in his chair.

V.

"My Liege! though well I now with triple claim
  The guerdon of my threefold toils may ask,
As independent of success i'the game
  Of jingling words, the ballad-maker's task;
Yet, as I too with honourable aim
  Have tapp'd Apollo's rhime-o'er-flowing cask,
Allow me, good my King! to ope my budget,
And tell my witty tale, that you and Mag may judge it."

VI.

Whereto his breathless King made slow reply,
(He drew a gulp of air each word between,)
"Great—Piper!—Mighty—Rob!—Belov'd—of sky!
O prov'd—too well thy—piping-craft—has been;
Witness my lungs—that play so puff—ingly,
And witness yonder—laughter-moving scene!
I'm pinch'd for wind—Ha, ha!—scarce breath I draw—
Pardi!—a sight like you my Kingship never saw!"

VII.

"Woes me! how sweating in prostration vast,
Men, wives, boys, maidens, lie in dust bestrown,
Gaping for respiration, gasping fast,
Half my liege subjects wreck'd on Anster loan!
'Twill need, methinks, a hideous trumpet-blast,
To rouse them from thus grov'lling basely prone;
For such effort my man's lungs yet are frail;
So, Rob, take thou his trump and rouse them for thy tale."—

VIII.

He spake,—and at the hint, the Ranter took
The throated metal from the Herald's hand,
And blew a rousing clangour, wherewith shook
Green sea, and azure sky, and cloddy land:
Up-sprung, as from a trance, with startled look,
The prostrate people, and erected stand,
Turning their faces to the knap of ground,
Whence burst upon their ears the loud assaulting sound.

IX.

Then, crowding nearer in a vasty shoal,
They press their sum of carcasses more close,
Till crush'd, and cramm'd, and straiten'd round the knoll,
They rear and poise their bodies on their toes:
So were they pack'd and mortis'd, that the whole
Seem'd but one lump incorp'rate to compose;
One mass of human trunks unmov'd they show,
Topp'd with ten thousand heads all moving to and fro.

X.

And from the tongues of all those heads there rose
A confus'd murmur through the multitude,
As when the merry gale of summer blows
Upon the tall tops of a stately wood,
And rocks the long consociated boughs,
Rustling amid the leaves a discord rude;
High perch'd aloft the cuckoo rides unseen,
Embower'd with plenteous shades, and tufts of nodding green.

XI.

Then wav'd the RANTER round and round his hand,
Commanding them to still their hubbub loud:
All in a moment, still and noiseless, stand
The widely-circumfus'd and heaving crowd,
As if upon their gums at ROB's command
Were pinn'd those tongues that jabber'd late so proud;
Tow'rds him, as to their centre, every ear
Inclines its mazy hole, th' expected tale to hear.

XII.

But when the RANTER from his height beheld
The silent world of heads diffus'd below;
With all their ears agape, his visage swell'd,
And burn'd with honest Laughter's ruddy glow;
For who had not from Gravity rebell'd,
Girt with infinitude of noddles so?
He soon into composure starch'd his phiz,
And op'd his fluent mouth, and told his tale, which is—

XIII.

"Where Thirdpart-house upon the level plain
Rears up its sooty chimneys high in air,
There liv'd of old, in ALEXANDER'S reign,
Miss SUSAN SCOTT, a lady young and fair,
Who sith that death her parents both had ta'en,
Sole child, their coffers and their fields did heir,—
Their fields, that wav'd with Ceres' green array,
Their coffers, gorg'd with gold, where Mammon pri-
son'd lay.

XIV.

Her form was beauteous as the budding Spring,
  Shap'd by the mother of almighty Love;
Her soul was but a sorry paltry thing,
  As e'er was quicken'd by the breath of Jove:
Her person might have pleas'd a crowned King,
  Or shone a Dryad in her Thirdpart grove;
Her soul, her silly soul, alas, to tell!
Was as a rotten egg inclos'd in golden shell.

XV.

All day she, sitting at her window, cast
  O'er her estate a proud and greedy eye;
Now measuring her fields, how broad, how vast,
  How valuably rich they sunning lie;
Now summing up the bolls that in the blast
  Wave yet unshorn, obnoxious to the sky,
And counting, avariciously, what more
Of gold th' unsickled crop would add unto her store.

XVI.

But when the grim and hooded Night let fall
  O'er Thirdpart's smoky roofs her ugly shade,
She hasten'd from her candle-lighten'd hall
  To where her darling coffer'd god was laid,
And freeing him with key from box's thrall,
  On floor the gaudy deity display'd,
And with a miser's fumbling palm'd each toy,
And kiss'd bare Mammon's limbs, and laugh'd in silly joy.

XVII.

With her resided that fam'd wizard old,
  Her uncle and her guardian, Michael Scott,
Who there, in Satan's arts malignly bold,
  His books of dev'lish efficacy wrote;
And, lackey'd round (tremendous to be told!)
  With demons hung with tails like shaggy goat,
Employ'd their ministrations damn'd, to ring
Madrid's resounding bells, and fright the Spanish King.

XVIII.

Fit guardian he for such a peevish ward:
He check'd not her perversity of soul,
But, hell's pernicious logic studying hard,
Gave up the lady to her own controul:
Thus fost'ring, by his foolish disregard,
The cank'ring vice that o'er her spirit stole:
Captious and proud she was, and fond of strife,
The pertest, prettiest jade of all the girls of Fife.

XIX.

Yet not the less her beauty's wafted fame
A mob of suitors to her mansion drew;
Her face had charms to lure them and inflame,
Her dow'r had mickle fascination too:
On cap'ring steeds from all the county came
Fife's sparkish lairds, all resolute to woo,
And win, with courtship's sly assiduous art,
Fair SUSAN's worthy dow'r, and pettish worthless heart.

XX.

So num'rous were her lovers, that, in troth,
I scarce by name can reckon up them all;
Ardross and Largo, gallant fellows both,
Pitcorthie, and Rankeilor, and Newhall,
And Newark, with his coat of scarlet cloth,
And short Stravithy, and Rathillet tall,
And proud Balcomie with his tassel'd hat,
And Gibliston the lean, and Sauchop round and fat.

XXI.

All these, and many more love-pining men,
She flouted from her chamber scornfully;
To one alone she us'd not such disdain,
The goodly Charly Melvil of Carnbee;
For he, the singly cunning of the train,
Enforc'd with costly gifts his am'rous plea,
And brib'd her dull affections icy-cold,
With jewel'd gairish rings, and knacks of labour'd gold.

XXII.

For ev'ry time he snatch'd her downy fist,
With its soft warmth to paddle and to play,
He hung a bracelet on her iv'ry wrist,
A golden bracelet like a sunbeam gay;
And when her lip he rapturously kist,
(A kiss she ne'er refus'd for such a pay,)
He dropt upon her white neck from his hand
A tangled chain of gold, worth many a rood of land.

XXIII.

Till of his trinkets so profuse he grew,
That soon exhausted was his purse's store,
And half his lands were in a month or two
Mortgag'd for money to procure her more;
Yet ne'er could he prevail on froward SUE,
Though ne'er he ceas'd t' importune and implore,
T' appoint the long-retarded marriage-day,
And cure his love, and give her promis'd hand away.

XXIV.

One summer eve, as in delightful walk,
  Handed, they past down Thirdpart's avenue,
And, in a lightsome interchange of talk,
  Whine'd out their loves, as lovers use to do,
Whilst ev'ry hairy bush upon its stalk
  Nodded for joy around them where it grew,
CHARLES took advantage of the lovely hour,
Again t' impress his suit with tongue's glib wordy power.—

XXV.

'O my sweet SUSAN! sweet my SUSAN O!—
  (Here beat the poor laird his afflicted breast,)
Cast round thine eye, that eye that witches so,
  On God's wide world in beauty's garment drest,
On yonder many-listed clouds that glow
  Heaven's tapestry curtaining the blazing west,
On yonder setting rays up-shot on high,
Like tiny wires of gold aslant the gorgeous sky.

XXVI.

Look how the bushy top of ev'ry tree
 Is mantled o'er with Evening's borrow'd sheen,
And seems to wag and wave more boastfully
 To the sweet breeze its leafy wig of green;
Each herb, and flower, and whin, and bush, we see,
 Laughs jocund in creation's richest scene,
Whilst earth reflects on heav'n, and heav'n on earth,
Of God's created things the beauty and the mirth:

XXVII.

All these are passing lovely to the view,
 But lovelier, tenfold lovelier are to me,
Thy form and countenance, my bonny Sue!
 Creation's beauties all are summ'd in thee;
Thine eye out-lustres heaven's most lucid blue;
 Thy cheek out-blooms earth's bloomiest flower and tree;
And Evening's gaudy clouds, that paint the air,
Are fripp'ry to the locks of thy long golden hair!

XXVIII.

Then hey! my sweeting, when shall come the day
Ordain'd to give me such transcendent charms?
Still must I pine and fret at thy delay,
Capriciously forbidden from thy arms,
And, like a pair of bellows, puff away
My sighs, and swelter in hot Cupid's harms?—
For heaven's sake, SUSAN, on my case have pity,
And fix our wedding-day, my chick, my dear, my pretty!'—

XXIX.

This said, he, gazing on her saucy eye,
Forestalls the angry answer of her tongue;
When hark! a sound of rushing, wildly high,
Is heard the trees adjoining from among,
As if a whirlwind, bursting from the sky,
Their tops on one another sore had swung;
An lo! out-springs in maddest pitch of wrath,
PITCORTHIE's biggest bull upon their peaceful path.

XXX.

'Fly, fly, my love!' the gen'rous MELVIL said,
And interpos'd to meet the monster's shock;
For fiercely rush'd he on th' endanger'd maid,
Mad at the glaring of her scarlet frock:
'Fly, fly, my love!'—she turn'd about and fled,
With face through terrour pale and white as smoke,
And left her laird, at danger of his scull,
To wrestle for his life, and parry with the bull.

XXXI.

The bull's long horns he grip'd, and tow'rd the ground
Press'd down with might his hugy head robust,
Whilst, madder thus defrauded of his wound,
The brawny brute his bulk still forward thrust,
And, riving with his heels the soil around,
Bespatter'd heav'n with turf, and sod, and dust,
And bellow'd till each tree around him shook,
And Echo bellow'd back from her aërial nook.

XXXII.

At last th' intrepid lover, guessing well
  That now far off from harm his Sue was sped,
Ungrip'd the horns, that, white and terrible,
  From brow their long and curling menace spread;
But scarce his grasp was loos'd, when (sad to tell!)
  Th' advantag'd brute toss'd churlishly his head,
And with one horn, that suddenly uprose,
Demolish'd and tore off the gallant Melvil's nose.

XXXIII.

Clean by the roots uptorn was Melvil's nose,
  Leaving its place deform and foul with blood;
Yet stood he not to reap some heavier blows,
  And catch in napkin the red rushing flood;
But quite regardless of his face's woes,
  He, hurrying down the alley of the wood,
Fled as if life were hung upon his heels;
Nor in his sweaty haste his nose's torment feels.

XXXIV.

Thus by the mettle of his heels he bore
His life in safety from the brute away,
And left behind his wound's unsightly gore,
To all the wild-cats of the grove a prey:
Homeward, in dumpish mood, afflicted sore,
He took with lamentation loud his way,
Wailing his piteous bitterness of case,
His nasal honours crush'd, and ghastly havock'd face.

XXXV.

Six weeks he kept his mansion at Carnbee,
Waiting his nose's re-establishment,
In vain; repair'd, alas! it could not be,
Too sore that horn the cartilage had shent.
Fife's surgeons crowding came, for love of fee,
With plaisters and with saws of loathsome scent,
In vain; what could or saw or surgeon do?
Gone was the good old nose, and who could rear a new?

XXXVI.

Meanwhile, he ceas'd not twice a week, to send
   Sweet cards to her, who did his thoughts employ,
Memorials dear, which as he sat and penn'd,
   Perch'd laughing on his quill Love's mighty boy,
And on the paper from its inky end
   Distill'd delight, and tenderness, and joy;
His cards he sent, but (O, the sin and shame!)
From wicked shameless SUE there ne'er an answer came.

XXXVII.

Nor could her cruel silence be explain'd,
   Till Fame blew up the tidings to his house,
That she, for whom his nose was marr'd and pain'd,
   To whom so long he had addrest his vows,
Had, for another, now his love disdain'd,
   Urg'd by her uncle NEWARK to espouse;
That publish'd were their bans, that now was fixt
The wedding to be held on Monday forenoon next.

5

XXXVIII.

Then was the heart of injur'd MELVIL rent
  With bitter passion at a slight so base;
That moment up he started, with intent
  To go and chide th' apostate to her face:
Forth from his house in surly chafe he went,
  Apparell'd in his coat of golden lace;
And eastward took his way alone and sad,
Half cursing, in his heart, a maid so base and bad.

XXXIX.

But when the little boys and girls survey'd
  His lack-nose visage as he travell'd by,
Some to their mothers' houses ran, afraid
  To tell them what a face had met their eye;
Some with their fingers pointed undismay'd,
  Giggling and blithe at his deformity;
Ev'n ploughmen, at the road-edge, paus'd from toil,
And held their sturdy sides, and loudly laugh'd a
    while.

XL.

Yet onward held the hapless laird his gait,
  Regardless of their mockery and scorn;
His sole vexation was the girl ingrate,
  In whose defence his beauty had been shorn.
He soon attain'd the ample hall, where sate,
  In morning dishabille, the fair forsworn;
And, ent'ring boldly in his angry mood,
With grimly-flatten'd face before her frowning stood.

XLI.

'Fy, Horror! who art thou,' she scoffing said,
  'That with defeature horrible to see,
Dar'st thus into my room advance thy stride,
  To fright my lapdog, and to sicken me?
Go, hie thee homeward, thou deform, and hide
  That aspect in the dingles of Carnbee;
There with thy rabbits burrow thee, till sprout
Forth from between thy cheeks a beautifying snout.'—

XLII.

This said, th' insulting creature from her chair,
  Red with resentment, on a sudden springs,
And bolting forward with a saucy air,
  Her shapely person from the chamber flings,
Leaving her honest laird confounded there,
  Heart-anguish'd by vexation's sharpest stings,
That he may vent his anger and his fume
On the fair carved chairs that decorate her room.

XLIII.

He got no long time to displode and vent
  On the fair chairs his bosom-choking ire;
For, from his closet by Miss SUSAN sent,
  Sir MICHAEL rush'd, the sorcerer stout and dire,
With staff in hand, to rattle chastisement
  Upon the ribs and backbone of the squire:
He beat him from the house with magic stick,
And added surly words, and rude discourteous kick.

XLIV.

Poor Melvil! griev'd, and mortify'd, and dampt,
His back he turn'd upon the uncivil door,
And, musing vengeance, down the alley trampt,
As boil'd his heart with indignation o'er;
He bit his lip, and curs'd the soil, and stampt,
Chafing his wrath with imprecation more;
For what man, so misus'd, could have forborne
To ban Sir Michael Scott, and Sue the fair for-
sworn?

XLV.

So down the avenue he banning past,
Scarce conscious whither in his fret he went,
Till Twilight tenanted the sky at last,
Pavilioning o'er Earth her sable tent,
And the round Moon, up-wheeling from the vast
Of sea, in pomp of clouds magnificent,
Embellish'd, with her sober silvery shine,
The leaves and barky trunks of Thirdpart's fir and pine.

XLVI.

'Alas! was e'er like me poor lover crost!
(He thus aloud deplor'd his wretched case,)
So fool'd, abus'd, and cocker'd to my cost,
So beaten into sorrow and disgrace!
Was't not enough that for the jade I lost
The rising honours of my ruin'd face;
But, like a hedge-born beggar tattars-hung,
Thus from her hated gate I must be switch'd and flung?

XLVII.

May vengeance seize thee, thou foul wizard churl,
For basting me at such an irksome rate!
May Satan gripe thee by the heel, and hurl
Thy carcass whizzing through Hell's hottest gate!
And as for thee, thou proud ingrateful girl,
Whose baseness, to my grief, I know too late,
May some good pow'r, the injur'd Lover's friend,
On thy perfidious head a wing'd requital send!'—

XLVIII.

His pray'r he thus ejaculating spake,
  Nor knew that some good pow'r was nigh to hear;
For in the middle of a flow'ry brake,
  That white with moonshine spread its thicket near,
Lay Tommy Puck, the gentle fay, awake;
  And Mrs Puck, his gentle lady dear,
Basking and lolling in the lunar ray,
And tumbling up and down in brisk fantastic play.

XLIX.

Quoth frisky Tommy to his elfin wife,
  'Didst thou not hear the gentleman, my chuck?
'Tis young CARNBEE, the sweetest Laird of Fife,
  Whom sour Sir MICHAEL with his cane has struck:
What think ye?—By Titania's precious life!
  Fits it not now the tender-hearted Puck
T' assist an injur'd lover, and to plot
A scheme of nice revenge on SUE and MICHAEL SCOTT?'

L.

'O yes, my dear!' his fairy consort said,
'Go forth, and to the man address thy talk:'
This heard, he from his bushy arbour's shade
Flung out his minim stature on the walk,
And stood in dwarfish finery array'd,
Gaudy as summer-bean's bloom-cover'd stalk;
He doff'd his hat, and made a bow profound,
And thus bespoke the Laird in words of pleasing sound.

LI.

'Marvel not, MELVIL, that before thy feet
I plant me thus in fearless attitude;
For I have heard, within my close retreat,
What thou hast utter'd in thy fretful mood;
And well I know thy truth how with deceit
Repaid, thy faith with base ingratitude:
Good soul! I pity thee with all my heart,
And therefore from my bush to thy assistance start:

LII.

For much it grieves Tom Puck's too feeling breast,
That one so good, so liberal and true,
Should thus become a laughter and a jest,
Mock'd, jilted, beaten into black and blue:
I like to help whom Malice has opprest,
And prompt a lover generous as you;
So with attention list what I propose,
To baffle and avenge, and laugh to scorn your foes.

LIII.

On Monday next, th' appointed wedding-day,
For perjur'd Sue her Newark to espouse,
When her long hall with feasting shall be gay,
And smoke with meats, with riot, and with bouse,
From thy paternal mansion haste away,
At height of noon, to Thirdpart's bustling house,
That thou, by time of dinner, may be there,
Prepar'd to climb the steps of her detested stair.

LIV.

And when th' exulting bridegroom and his bride,
Surrounded with their festive spousal train,
Are seated at their tables, long and wide,
Wielding their noisy forks and knives amain,
Then burst into the hall with dauntless stride
Through menials, greasy cooks, and serving-men,
Nor speak a word though in thy way they stand,
But dash the scroyls aside with swing of boist'rous hand.

LV.

Surprise, be sure, shall seize the feasters all
At such a bold intruder on their treat;
Their forks, half-lifted to their mouths, shall fall
Down on their plates, unlighten'd of their meat;
Yet speak not still, but casting round the hall
An eye whose every glance is fire and threat,
Thou in a corner of the room shalt see
Sir MICHAEL's magic staff, the same that basted thee.

LVI.

Snatch up that magic energetic stick,
And, in thy clench'd hand wielding it with might,
On MICHAEL's white bald pate discharge thou quick
A pelt enough to stun the wizard wight:
Strange consequence shall follow from that lick;
Yet be not thou amaz'd or struck with fright,
But springing to the table's upper end,
Let on his niece's nose an easier pat descend.

LVII.

I will not now unfold what odd event
From either stroke will suddenly ensue;
Enough to know, that plenteous punishment
Shall light on grim Sir MICHAEL and on SUE:
Go—by your nose's cure, be confident
That Tommy Puck aright thus counsels you.'—
This said, he, from a vial silver-bright,
Pour'd out upon his palm a powder small and white;

LVIII.

And to his mouth up-lifting it, he blows
  The magic dust on Melvil's blemish'd face,
When (such its power) behold another nose
  Sprouts out upon the scarr'd and skinless place,
And to th' astonish'd moon, fair-jutting, shows
  Its supplemental elegance and grace:
Which done, he, shining like a bright glow-worm,
Plung'd deep amid the brake his puny pretty form.

LIX.

Amaze had taken Melvil, when appear'd
  Erect before his steps the pigmy fay;
Yet not with less attention had he hear'd
  What courteous Tommy did so kindly say:
That heart, late vex'd and tortur'd, now was cheer'd,
  And merrily beat in Hope's delightful play:
Homeward he jogg'd from Thirdpart's haunted shade,
Proud of his novel nose, and Tommy's tender'd aid.

LX.

Arriv'd the day when saucy SUE should wed
  Young NEWARK, vap'ring in his scarlet coat;
From his paternal mansion MELVIL sped
  To Thirdpart house, t' atchieve his ready plot.
'Twas dinner-time; the tables all were spread
  With luscious sirloins reeking richly hot;
Gravies and pies, and steaming soups of hare,
And roasted hen and goose, and titbits nice and rare.

LXI.

SUE at the table's place of honour sat,
  Dealing the warm broth from its vessel out;
Whilst, slashing with his knife through lean and fat,
  Carv'd at the lower end Sir MICHAEL stout:
'Twas nought but mirth, and junketing, and chat,
  And handing wings and legs of fowl about,
And noise of silver spoons, and clank and clatter,
Of busy forks and knives, of porringer and platter.

LXII.

Squire Melvil heard without the dinner's din;
  Nor tarry'd; but with brisk and boist'rous bound,
Jump'd up the stairs, and rudely rushing in,
  Dash'd down whom standing in his way he found;
Menials and apron'd cooks of greasy chin,
  Fist-founder'd, went a-rapping to the ground,
With all their loads of sauces, meats, and plates,
In ruin fat and rich hurl'd on their pitiful pates.

LXIII.

Astonish'd were the feasters when they view'd
  Such bold intruder stand before their eyes;
The morsels in their mouths that lay half-chew'd,
  Could not be swallow'd through their great surprise;
Their half-rais'd forks, bestuck with gobbets good,
  Dropt, as if impotent more high to rise;
Each on his neighbour cast a meaning stare,
As if he dumbly ask'd, What does Squire Melvil
    there?

LXIV.

'Twas for a moment silent in the hall,
As if pale Death, the chapless, and the grim,
Had taken by the throat, and choak'd them all,
With his long, fleshless, scraggy, fingers slim;
Till, throwing round his glance from wall to wall,
The Squire discern'd the staff with tassel trim,
Sir MICHAEL's staff with head of silver white,
Wherewith he was enjoin'd its owner's poll to smite.

LXV.

He flew, he grasp'd it by its silver rind,
And to the ceiling swinging it on high,
Brought down on MICHAEL's pate, as quick as wind,
A pelt that whizz'd and rattled horribly;
Sounded his bald scull with the stroke unkind,
Re-echoing in each lore-fill'd cavity,
When, O the wonder, on his high arm-chair,
Chang'd was the churlish knight that instant to a hare!

LXVI.

His dainty head, with learning so replete,
  Collaps'd, grew round, and little, and long-ear'd;
His arms, that yet were stretch'd to carve the meat,
  Quite shrunken into two fore-legs appear'd;
His brawny thighs turn'd hind-legs on his seat
  Whereon his metamorphos'd form was rear'd;
And, to complete the quadruped, out-sprouted
A short tail from his rump, with plenteous hair about
    it.

LXVII.

He sat not long, so transmew'd, on his chair,
  But, lighting on the carpet-cover'd floor,
Scudded as swift as lightning down the stair,
  On his four bestial legs, to gain the door;
'Hollo!' cried boy and groom, 'A hare! a hare!'
  As flew he from the house their eyes before;
'Hollo! let loose on Puss the fleet grey-hound!'
Was bawl'd in Thirdpart's court from one to t'other
    round.

LXVIII.

Unkennel'd in a twink was fleet grey-hound,
And after Puss commenced the keen pursuit;
O'er plough'd, o'er sown, o'er green, o'er fallow ground,
With lev'ret craft, and wile of weary foot,
With skip and scud and ditch-o'erleaping bound,
The wizard ran in guise of hairy brute,
While snuffing out with sapient nose his track,
Came yelling at his heels all Thirdpart's clam'rous pack.

LXIX.

Eastward they scour'd, out-scampering the gale,
Long-winded dog and pursy panting hare,
Till, taking refuge in the streets of Crail,
Sir Michael plung'd him in a jaw-hole there,
And left, without, his foes with wagging tail
Worrying the sky with bark of loud despair,
As he, secure, was fain to slink and cuddle
Encav'd beneath the street within his miry puddle.

LXX.

There let us leave the Knight to cuddle fain,
And long-tongued dog to volley out his yell,
And turn we to the banquet-hall again,
Where MICHAEL's metamorphosis befel:
No sooner saw the Squire that not in vain
The staff had lighted, but succeeded well,
Than, bounding up to where jilt SUSAN sat,
On her fair nose's bridge he brought a gentle pat.

LXXI.

A second miracle ensues; for lo!
That nose, her countenance's pride and grace,
Grows out, and shoots, and lengthens at the blow,
Ridiculously sprouting from her face,
And aye it swells and beetles moe and moe,
Tap'ring to such a length its queer disgrace,
That dips its point at last amid the broth,
That near her lies in dish upon the table-cloth.

LXXII.

Nor did her aspect only suffer shame ;
For, in proportion as extends her nose,
Her shoulders, late so beautiful of frame,
Into a hump up-heaving, hugely rose,
Most mountainous and high, as ill became
Fair bride array'd in sumptuous wedding clothes;
Her very gown was burst and riven through,
With the large fleshy swell, so strangely big it grew !

LXXIII.

Then shook the room with laughter's frequent crack,
As saw the guests each droll excrescence rise ;
One pointed to her still-upheaving back,
One to her nose's still-enlarging size ;
'Ha ! ha !' from every Squire's throat loudly brake,
'Te-hee !' each Lady chuckles and replies ;
'Heav'ns, what a hideous nose !' cried every dame ;
'Heav'ns, what a hideous hump !' did every Laird exclaim.*

* Wieland gives to one of his Fairy Tales a catastrophe somewhat similar, if I recollect right, to the above.

LXXIV.

Such was the punishment which silly Sue
  From her resentful much-wrong'd lover bore;
And so was sour Sir Michael punish'd too,
  For caneing honest Melvil from her door:
Wherefore, as now the work of vengeance due
  Was finish'd, Charlie left her chamber-floor,
And turn'd his face, rejoicing, towards home,
Mutt'ring his grateful thanks to little elfin Tom."—

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO VI.

ANSTER FAIR.

CANTO VI.

I.

O THAT my noddle were a seething kettle,
Frothing with bombast o'er the Muses' fire!
O that my wit were sharper than a nettle!
O that with shrill swan-guts were strung my lyre!
So would I rant and sing with such a mettle,
That each old wife in Fife's full peopled shire
Should, Maenad-like, spring from her spinning wheel,
And frolic round her bard, and wince a tott'ring reel.

II.

Scarce had the victor ceas'd his hindmost clause,
When from th' immensity of folk afar,
Rose such a hideous shout of loud applause,
As ever stunn'd with outcry sun or star;
Each tongue grew riotous within its jaws,
Clacking an acclamation popular;
Hands, high o'erhead uplifted, round and round,
Struck plausive palm on palm, and clapt a rattling sound.

III.

And twice ten thousand hats, aloft upthrown
In black ascension, blot heaven's blue serene,
O'ercanopying ANSTER's crowded Loan
With crown and rim, as with a dusky screen;
And bonnets broad, and caps of sharp'ning cone,
Afloat 'twixt earth and firmament are seen,
And lasses cowls, and hoods, uptost on high,
Encroach with tawdry clout upon the clouds of sky.

IV.

As when a troop of locusts, famine-pin'd,
  From Edom's unblest monster-breeding womb,
Sail on the hot wings of the southern wind
  Wriggling aloft their sky-hung mass of gloom;
And where El Sham's clear golden riv'lets wind,
  Through her gay gardens distributing bloom,
They light, and spread their devastation round,
Bepainting black as pitch the green luxuriant ground:

V.

Just such a darkness mounts into the sky,
  Of hat and hood, of bonnet and of cap,
So thick, that those who swing them up on high
  Below i'the shade are heard to shout and clap;
For still the folk applaud it lustily,
  And pain their tingling palms with noisy rap,
Expressing thus, with deaf'ning acclamation,
Of ROBERT's merry tale, their hearty approbation.

VI.

Nor sits the Monarch idle to th' acclaim;
But, rising up majestic from his chair,
With kingly praise augments the Victor's fame,
And clapping, grinds between his palms the air:
Then seizes he the fingers of the Dame,
And gently raising from her seat the fair,
He, as the sign and seal of marriage-band,
Slips into Robert's grasp his Maggie's tender hand.

VII.

He bade his choir of Trumpeters apply
To mouth their hollow instruments of sound,
And, in an unison of clangour high,
Publish the marriage to the world around:
The fellows blew it to the peak of sky,
And sky sent down again the loud rebound;
Earth did to Heav'ns high top the news up-throw,
And Heav'n re-bruited back th' alarum down below.

VIII.

But now the beam-hair'd coursers of the sun,
All-smoking with their fiery hot fatigue,
Their task of charioting had pranc'd and run,
And hurled in sea their hissing golden gig:
Their unshorn driver had but just begun
Beyond the Isle of Bute the wave to swig;
And, twinkling o'er Auld Reekie's smoke afar,
Peep'd through Heav'ns mantle blue the modest evening star.

IX.

And soon the Moon in hood of silver drest,
All glistering and gladsome as may be,
Forth from her glorious casement in the east
Look'd laughing down upon both land and sea;
And on the bosom of the dark'ning west
Her pearly radiance shot rejoicingly:
Also the heads of all that fill the Loan
Wax'd yellow with the rays that on them streaming shone.

X.

Wherefore, as now the damp nocturnal air
  Began to dribble down its chilly dew,
And as, of all the business of the Fair,
  Nought now remain'd upon the green to do;
The Herald, from beside the Monarch's chair,
  Abroad the signal of dispersion blew,
That the wide multitude, dispread around,
Should now break up its mass, and leave the nighted
  ground.

XI.

Which heard, the congregated folk upbroke
  With loud disruption their diffusion vast,
And, split and shoaling off in many a flock,
  With homeward squeeze they turbulently past:
Beneath their feet the pillar'd Earth did rock,
  As up to Jove a dusty cloud they cast,
That blear'd the bright eyes of Night's glimm'ring
  queen,
And chok'd the brilliant stars, and dimm'd their
  twinkling sheen.

XII.

And such the clutter was, when shoal from shoal
  With violent impulse was torn and riven,
As when the vaulting ice, that floors the pole,
  Touch'd by the fiery shafts of warming Heaven,
Splits into fractur'd isles, that crash and roll
  Diverse, athwart the molten ocean driven;
The Greenland boatman hears the noise afar,
And blesses for its heat day's winter-routing star.

XIII.

So loudly rush'd from Anster's cumber'd Loan,
  The burthenous and bustling multitude,
Kicking th' o'ertrampled earth they trod upon
  With saucy heel in their impetuous mood;
Some to their tents of blanket jump'd anon,
  That on the fields and crofts adjoining stood;
Some to their booths and houses in the town,
Hie hot with huddling haste, and hop and hurry down.

XIV.

Meanwhile, the King, as now sufficient space
  Was for his passage clear'd about the mound,
Descended from his lofty honour'd place,
  Where sat he mid his gallant courtiers round:
Close at his right hand downward walk'd, with grace,
  The well-earn'd prize, bright MAGGIE the renown'd;
While the great Victor at his other side,
Attended blithe and brisk, exulting in his Bride.

XV.

On their brave nags their persons up they swing,
  And to the borough gently jogging ride,
Hemm'd thick around with an illustrious ring
  Of gay Court-ladies, trooping side by side,
And Lords, whose coats with gold lace spangled, fling
  Back on th' abashed Moon her beamy pride,
And jolly Knights, and booted Esquires stout,
And burghers, clowns, and boys, a noisy rabble-rout.

4

XVI.

As downward to the town they tramp and trot,
The mingled peals of gratulation rise;
For, on their catlings, fiddlesticks, I wot,
Bicker'd and skipt in funny furious wise,
And trumpet rear'd again its solemn note
Sonorously, assailant on the skies,
Full loudly lifting in a jocund tune,
The name of Ranter Rob up to the man i'the moon.

XVII.

And sounding cymbals clink and ring sublime,
Clash'd overhead in lofty unison;
And fife and flute in merry whistle chime,
Soothing the lulled ear with dulcet tone;
While aye the bass-drum, at his proper time,
Swallows the music with his sudden groan;
Till drum, flute, cymbal, trumpet, all are drown'd
In shouts, that pealing rise from the mad mob around.

XVIII.

Thus rode the train, as if in triumph down,
  Exulting, through the night's moon-gilded shade,
Till, reaching Maggie's quarter of the town,
  Stops at her house the splendid cavalcade;
(For be it now, my good co-townsmen! known,
  That in th' East-green's best house fair Maggie stay'd,
Near where St Ayle's small lodge in modern day
Admits to mystic rites her bousy masons gay.)

XIX.

At Maggie's door they stopp'd; when, lighting there,
  The bridegroom brisk, and jolly-minded King,
And showy Nobleman, and Lady fair,
  From pad and saddle on the causey spring,
And, passing in due order up her stair,
  The good landlady to her chamber bring,
A pomp of rare attendance brave and bright,
With sweetly-biting jest, and joke of dear delight.

XX.

In her torch-brighten'd chamber down they sate
  Upon her chairs, jocundly one and all,
And exercise their tongues in social prate,
  Till MAGGIE's cooks and JAMES's seneschal
May well prepare and range each supper-plate
  On her long table in her dining-hall:—
There let us leave awhile, King, Lord, and Lady,
And saunter through the town till supper's fare be
    ready.

XXI.

Heav'ns! how from street to street the people reel,
  As if they knew not where to rush for joy!
How rocks the causey with incessant heel
  Of hurrying man, and wife, and maid, and boy!
From lane and wynd the sounds of gladness peal,
  Hitting the stars with clamorous annoy;
As all the houses' walls and roofs are bright
With bonfire's yellow glow, and candles' gentler light.

XXII.

For in each window's every pane is seen,
  Stuck into fitly-fashion'd wood or clay,
A tallow candle flinging forth its sheen,
  T' augment th' illumination's grand display;
How flame the houses with a lustre keen,
  In emulation of the sun-bright day!
Ev'n the poor old-wife's backroom-window glows,
Gilding the good green kail that underneath it grows:

XXIII.

While in each well-proved street and alley strait,
  And at the Cross, and up along the Loan,
Their spiry curls huge bonfires elevate,
  Cracking with heat the ground and causey-stone;
For ev'ry bonfire was a cart-load great
  Of Dysart coal, that redly flash'd and shone,
Emblazing with its tongues of flame so bright,
The dusk and smutty brow of star-bestudded night.

XXIV.

And, gawntress'd round each ruddy fire about,
Hogsheads of porter and of cheery ale,
Forth from their little gurgling bung-holes spout
Their genial streams in tankard, pot, and pail:
O 'twas a wild notorious guzzling-bout!
That night no throat was narrow, or was frail,
But, in long draughts delicious, swallow'd down
The barley's mantling cream, and bev'rage stout and brown.

XXV.

(Not from thy brew-house's well-barrel'd store,
O Roger! comes a drink of stronger proof,
Though foams thy hearty ale the tankard o'er,
And sends its cork a-thund'ring to the roof:)
Ev'n ancient men, whose hairs were thin and hoar,
Then staid not from the fuddle's fun aloof,
But drank till every head was giddy turning,
And to their reeling eyes each fire in sky seem'd burning.

XXVI.

Yet not all night each brisk warm-booded boy,
  Sat drinking with his sweet-heart blithe and boon;
They on the Loan, in many a reel, employ
  Their bouncing bodies wriggling to the moon,
And almost wince away their heels for joy,
  Tossing and riving their dance bursten shoon,
Whilst, ever and anon, or ere she wist,
Smack by her partner dear each bonny lass was kiss'd.

XXVII.

Such out of doors was the disport and bouse;
  But higher was the pitch of joy within;
That night was ANSTER's every barn and house
  Converted into tippling-shop and inn;
Garrets and bed-rooms reek with hot carouse,
  And steaming punch of whisky and of gin;
The kitchen fires are crowded round and round
With rings of lively lads, that swig their bowls profound.

XXVIII.

Hey! how their glasses jingle merrily!
How rings the table with their revel-roar!
How, as they toast their MAG with three times three,
Sounds with loud heel the vex'd tormented floor!
They sing, they clap, they laugh with honest glee;
Were never seen such merry men heretofore!
Through window glass and stony wall bursts out
Abroad on night's dull ear the wassail's frequent shout.

XXIX.

But now, in MAGGIE's tapestry-decked hall,
Serv'd is the sumptuous marriage-supper up,
And clean neat-handed cook and seneschal
Hath set each mess, and dish, and plate, and cup;
So down in seemly order sit they all,
With stomachs stiff and resolute to sup,
And set their griding forks and knives to work,
On turkey, goose, and hen, cold veal, and cheek of pork.

XXX.

Behoves it not my bardship to relate
  What various viands burden'd MAGGIE's board;
What lay on this, and what on t'other plate,
  What Lady first was help'd, and by what Lord,
What mess the King, and what the others ate:
  That would be tedious trifling, 'pon my word;
I will not do't, though I could tell, in sooth,
How oft each fork was rais'd to every munching
    mouth.

XXXI.

Suffice it, good my townsmen, that ye know,
  That there fastidious teeth found pleasant food,
That all the cates that kingly banquets show
  Were spread before them, fragrant, rich, and good;
And that, though some ate less and some ate moe,
  Each ate as much, be certain, as he cou'd;
Till, tir'd at last of piddling with their gums,
They eas'd of knife and fork their fingers and their
    thumbs.

XXXII.

But when the sound of teeth had ceas'd i'the hall,
And fork and knife lay idle on their plate,
And guest and hostess, backward leaning all,
Their picktooths now were plying, saturate,
Up from his seat arose the Bridegroom tall,
Where to his blooming Spouse oppos'd he sate,
And, e'er the table-cloth was ta'en away,
He turn'd him to the King, and thus addrest his say:—

XXXIII.

"Think not, my Liege, that Fortune, or that Chance,
To-day hath made me in my conquest blest,
Impelling me by casual circumstance,
To jump without a warrant like the rest;
'Twas not alone with Heav'ns high sufferance,
I put my jumping-prowess to the test;
'Twas by its order I in sack was bound;
'Twas with its favour too, that I my Bride have found.

XXXIV.

Nor deem that some dumb beldam, Satan's tool,
Or wily witch, or second-sighted seer,
Hath, oracling, deceiv'd me like a fool,
To think I to supernal Pow'r am dear;
No, Monarch; by the cowl of old St Rule!
I heard the order with no proxy ear,
And with my own true eye unfalsify'd,
I ev'n upon my chair the goodly vision spy'd:

XXXV.

For, on an evening in December last,
('Twas just the evening of that day, whereon
The stout-lung'd criers through the Border past,
Proclaiming what should hap in Anster Loan,)
As down to supper's sober cool repast
I sat me in my dining-room alone,
Musing upon the late heard news so odd,
Blown from the trump of fame and crier's throat abroad;

XXXVI.

I happen'd in my fingers up to take
The pepper-box, where lurk'd my spicy stores,
And held it o'er my plate, intent to shake
The fragrant atoms from its little bores,
When, as my hand inverted it, there brake
Out from the tin lid's perforated pores,
A stream of beauteous smoke, that, like a mist,
Curl'd its delicious wreaths around my shaded fist.

XXXVII.

Astonish'd at the prodigy, I threw
The steaming box upon the table-cloth,
When, more with miracle t' amaze my view,
It frisk'd and trotted mid the plates, i' troth,
And ceas'd not from its num'rous holes to spue
Its incense white as flakes of ocean froth,
Up-sending to the ceiling of the room
Its supernat'ral flux of pure and fragrant fume.

XXXVIII.

I sat and gaz'd—not long; when, strange to say,
  Forth from that reeky pillar's paly base,
Started at once a little female fay,
  Giggling and blithely laughing in my face;
Her height was as the lily, that in May
  Lifts to the sun her head's envermeil'd grace;
Her beauty as the rays of various glow,
That glorify the length of Heav'ns sea-drinking bow.

XXXIX.

The gown in which her elf-ship was array'd,
  Like to the peacock's painted feather shined,
And on the tablecloth redundant spread
  Its lustrous train for half a foot behind;
Over her breast her purple-striped plaid
  Lay floating loose and thin as woven wind;
And gorgeous was her head-dress, as the hue
Of Iris-flower, that spreads her velvet petals blue.

XL.

Deck'd was her neck's circumference with row
Of diamonds, strung on thread in costly band,
Small pearly berries that are wont to grow
Upon the bushes of old Fairyland;
And in each diamond's orb so fair in show,
My candle's image burning seem'd to stand,
That her white slender neck was all in gleam,
Doubly impearled thus with Light's reflected beam.

XLI.

And pendent from her neck, by golden thread,
A little dangling silver lute I saw,
Of fashion rare, and quaintly polished,
Not thicker than a pipe of oaten straw:
She laugh'd and nodded courteously her head,
Belike to clear away my doubt and awe,
For, sooth to say, I was not unafear'd,
When from my pepper-box good lady fay appear'd.

XLII.

She dropt a curtsey, reverently low,
  And thus bespoke in clear and mellow voice;
'Twas sweeter than the chiming winds that blow
  Upon th' Æolian harp a whiffled noise:—
'Excuse me, good your worship! that I so
  With my quaint presence mar your supper's joys;
I have some little matter to impart;
'Twill not detain you long.—Nay, ROBERT—do not start:

XLIII.

Compose thee, Squire, and calmly give thine ear
  To what shall from my gentle mouth proceed,
For mickle shall it profit thee to hear,
  And prize aright the value of my rede;
And be assur'd thy person, ROB, is dear
  To the slim creatures of the fairy breed,
That thus I peer from out my box of spice,
To tender, for thy weal, my uncompell'd advice:

XLIV.

Hast thou not heard the wond'rous news to-day,
  Through all the marches of the Border blown,
Of sports, and games, and celebrations gay,
  Promulgate to be held in ANSTER Loan,
And that a maid the victor's toils shall pay,
  A maid, whose beauty is excell'd by none?
Thou hast—and I surpris'd thee deep in muse,
A-pond'ring on th' import of such amazing news:

XLV.

Go, when o'er Cockraw peeps Light's golden horn,
  And seek a supple ass whereon to ride;
Go, seek a long sack, sturdy and untorn,
  Wherein to jump with drolly-trammel'd stride;
Go, seek a bagpipe whose wind-pouch unworn,
  May well the wrath of prison'd breath abide;
Go, set thy brain to work like vat of ale,
And skim thou off for MAG some smart ingenious tale.

XLVI.

And know, when at the Loan is try'd thy skill,
  Thy ass I'll nettle on with spur unseen;
Into thy bones and sinews I'll instil
  Great vigour to o'erjump the quaking green;
Thy bagpipe's pouch with tempest I will fill,
  Lending thy tune a witchery not mean;
And from thy study-rack'd perplexed brains,
A merry tale I'll squeeze, the help-mate of thy pains.

XLVII.

So shalt thou, Squire, in Scotland's view be crown'd
  Upon the spot with victory and fame,
And ride a happy bridegroom from the ground,
  Elate and glorying in thy peerless dame:
Yet when thy toil's transcendant prize is found,
  And marriage-revelries thy joy proclaim,
I charge thee, as my aid shall make thee blest,
Forget not what I now, as to my box, request:

XLVIII.

This box—this pepper box—this homely shrine,
Wherein confin'd by wizard spell I stay,
Must be transported in a pouch of thine,
When thou to ANSTER Loan dost take thy way;
And when thou down to marriage feast and wine
Shalt sit, in MAGGIE's hall, a bridegroom gay,
Then from thy pocket draw it in a trice,
And on the table-cloth lay down the box of spice.

XLIX.

Ask not the purport of my odd behest;
'Twill be unriddled in the proper place;
'Tis thine t' effect the task, and leave the rest
To Madam Puck's good complaisance and grace.'—
Here Madam Puck her piping voice suppress,
And, with a sweet smile on her little face,
Rear'd up the small lute in her lily fist,
And with her rose-red lip its furbish'd silver kiss'd.

L.

She play'd a tune so delicate and sweet,
So overpow'ring with its ravishment,
That sit I could no longer on my seat,
But up and cap'ring o'er my chamber went,
As if within the soles of both my feet,
A store of frisky Mercury was pent;
(And, by the bye, 'twas just the tune, with which
My bagpipe did to-day your reeling Loan bewitch.)

LI.

At length she ceas'd, and in a stroke o'the eye
Delv'd down within her jail of tin again,
And in her stead left curling bonnily
A smoke, whose odour ravish'd nose and brain—
No more, my gracious Liege—what need have I
Longer to talk, where talking would be vain?—
Behold—what Mrs Puck commanded me—
'Tis but a sorry thing—the pepper-box—d'ye see?

LII.

Thus speaking, from the pocket of his coat,
 Wherein he had convey'd it to our town,
The goblin-haunted pepper-box he brought,
 And, laughing, set it on the table down;
Great laughter crackled in the Monarch's throat,
 As on the cloth he saw the tin y-thrown;
And giggling guest 'gan fling his jeers and jokes
Upon the paltry frame of ROB's poor pepper-box.

LIII.

But soon was chang'd their blithe to fearful mood,
 When strait, afore each half-mistrusting eye,
The bawbling box of pepper, where it stood,
 Began again to dance spontaneously,
And fidg'd and frisk'd, in strange inquietude,
 Among the plates that thickly-ranged lie,
Directing to the table's middle part
Its motion by the side of broken pie and tart.

LIV.

Yet to a greater pitch their wonder grew,
  When, at the table's other end, they spy
Fair MAGGIE's mustard-pot commencing too
  To gambol and to fidge in sympathy;
(The self-same pot, whence burst to MAGGIE's view,
  Of late Tom Puck, with brightly-breeched thigh;)
As would a hen leap on a fire-hot griddle,
So leap'd the mustard-pot toward the table's middle.

LV.

Short while they flirted, pepper-box and pot,
  Most laughable, yet fearful to be view'd,
Till, meeting on the table's midmost spot,
  Stock-still th' ignoble bouncing vessels stood,
And from their little cells, where lay the hot
  Ground pepper, and the biting mustard good,
Were in a moment seen at once to break
Two parallel white shafts of silv'ry spouting reek:

LVI.

Ascending curl'd, not long, each sep'rate fume,
  Up-throwing to the roof its preciousness,
When with a fire-flash that emblaz'd the room,
  Burst from the hollow mustard-pot's recess
Good Tommy Puck, the fay of roseate bloom,
  Clad in his custom'd gaudery of dress;
And, with a second gleam of flashy light,
Sprung from the spicy-box good Madam Puck to sight.

LVII.

With faces to each other turn'd they rise,
  Scarce sunder'd by a finger's length of space,
And, in an instant, as they recognise,
  With glimpse of quick eye, each the other's face,
They fall, as if o'ercome with sweet surprise,
  On one another's necks in close embrace,
Like friends that, having long liv'd far apart,
Meet and relieve in tears the joy-o'erburden'd heart.

LVIII.

Astonishment his whitely ensign shows
  On each spectator's visage at the sight;
Courtier and King, that sat to table close,
  Slily push'd back their chairs, confounded quite;
The Ladies hid their faces in their clothes,
  Or underneath the table slunk for fright;
Save Mag and Rob, who laugh'd to see once more,
The tricksy kindly ouphes that hail'd them heretofore.

LIX.

Awhile the pair of pigmies on the spot,
  Lock'd their fantastic persons jole to jole,
And, as two doves of plumy-varnish'd throat
  Sit billing in their dove-cot's nested hole,
Their liquid wee lips twitter'd kisses hot
  In fond commutuality of soul;
It was a treat to see how sweetheart-like
Their fiery fairy mouths the dear collision strike!

LX.

At length, as rapture's first excess was past,
  They disentangle their endear'd embrace,
And, tow'rd the King and guests that sat aghast,
  Turn'd round each minim prettyness of face;
Dame Puck, to MAG and those beside her placed,
  Let fall a curtsey with a courtly grace;
Tom, fronting JAMES, took hat from off his brow,
And curv'd his goblin back into a goodly bow.

LXI.

A glance upon the company he shot,
  And smil'd on MAG that sat at head o'the board,
Then from his silly dulcet-piping throat
  Sweet utterance of word-clad breath he pour'd:—
"O Monarch! let amazement seize thee not;
  Be of good cheer, each Dame and noble Lord!
Ungown your timid faces, all ye Fair!
Draw ye to table close, each Gentleman your chair!

LXII.

For do not think that in us twain you spy
  Two spirits of the perter wicked sort,
That, buzzing on bad errand through the sky,
  In pranks of molestation take their sport,
Confounding old-wives churns, and slipping sly
  Their stools from underneath them to their hurt,
Or chucking young sweet maids below the chin,
That so they bite the tongue their tender mouths
    within.

LXIII.

Of kindlier hearts are Tommy and his spouse,
  Aidant to some, benevolent to all;
For oft we sweep the thrifty matron's house
  With besom quaint, invisible, and small,
Oft from her cheese and butter chase the mouse,
  Preyless, into the cavern of his wall,
And oft her churn-staff gripe, that in a twink
The waves of bubbling cream to buttery masses sink.

LXIV.

But chiefly of young lovers true and kind,
The patrons and the guardians good are we,
Linking each mutual and harmonious mind
In silver cord of dear complacency;
But when the vows, that should restrain and bind,
Broke to another's misery we see,
'Tis ours to take the injur'd lover's part,
And on the perjur'd head deal out th' avenging smart.

LXV.

Witness what vengeance hit Miss SUSAN SCOTT,
Whose back and visage, for her breach of troth,
Obtain'd a penal and opprobrious blot,
Swoln out to counterpoise each other's growth;
And though, for our suggestion of that plot,
To punish her and her sour guardian both,
My wife and I hath suffer'd hard and long,
Yet, by my Monarch's beard! 'twas right t' avenge the wrong.

LXVI.

O we have suffer'd much!—that wizard foul,
(Beshrew his meagre vile malicious ghost!)
No sooner scap'd from Crail's vile sewer-hole,
And took again the shape that he had lost,
Than, with his long-tail'd demons black as coal
That whiz to serve him from Hell's every coast,
Consulting in his study, soon he learn'd
Who prompted CHARLES to wreak the vengeance justly earn'd.

LXVII.

Then churn'd the sorcerer's mouth the surly foam;
He clench'd his fist and swore by Beelzebub,
He forthwith should o'er half the country roam,
Beating each thicket with his oaken club,
To find out dapper intermeddling Tom
In his inhabited and secret shrub,
And heel him forth reluctant to the day,
And for his pranks chastise upon his breech the fay.

LXVIII.

His hat he put on his craft-crammed head;
He grip'd his hugy gnarled staff in hand,
And down his study-stair, with sounding tread,
Came spitting smoke like newly-lighted brand:
Forth from the gate he in a hurry sped,
To beat the total bushes of the land,
Cursing at every step the harmless breed
Of elfs, that aid the wrong'd in grievous time of need.

LXIX.

Need it be told? Alas! too soon he found
The bush, where with my dame I sleeping lay;
Too soon his cudgel, thrashing round and round,
Graz'd our slim bodies in its dang'rous play;
And, had not Ob'ron sav'd us both from wound,
Our brains had fairly been dash'd out that day;
We woke—we shriek'd—his rugged hand he stretch'd,
And from our leafy bed us by the heels he fetch'd.

LXX.

His long-nail'd hairy fingers, grasping tight
Our waists, uprear'd us to his bearded chin,
And held us there in melancholy plight,
Wriggling our innocent frail members thin:
He spat upon our faces with despite,
Glooming his phiz into a joyful grin;
Then, lowering down, he plung'd us ere we wot,
Each int' a sep'rate pouch of his great clumsy coat.

LXXI.

There lay we button'd in, and closely pent
In a dark dungeon of detested cloth,
As, tracing back his steps, he homeward went,
And to his chamber bore us dangling both;
He drew us forth, the wicked churl, intent
On base revenge, malevolent and wroth,
And with unseemly usage treated each,
And slapp'd with scurvy palm my little harmless breech.

LXXII.

Then did he in his wickedness begin
  To practise his detestable device;
He took a paltry pepper-box of tin,
  And hoisting up my consort in a trice,
He push'd her weeping ladyship within,
  Clean through the lid amid the pungent spice;
(For fairy shapes can be contracted so
As through a needle's eye right easily to go:)

LXXIII.

He push'd her shrieking down into the cell,
  With cruel taunt, and mocking devilish,
And mutter'd o'er her a confining spell
  Of Hell's abhorr'd and uncouth gibberish:—
'*Lie there, Dame Puck!*' he cried, '*and bed thee well*
  In the snug durance of thy penal dish;
There be a tenant till the day shall come
Ordain'd t' enfranchise thee from thy ignoble tomb!'

LXXIV.

A sorry mustard-pot then took the Knight,
And, 'tween his fingers lifting me sublime,
He push'd and plung'd me, yelling with affright,
Amid the mustard's yellow sloughy slime;
And, '*Lie thou there,*' he cried, '*thou meddling sprite!*
And do the proper penance for thy crime;
There be a tenant till the day shall come
Ordain'd t' enfranchise thee from thy ignoble tomb!

LXXV.

Nor meet Tom Puck and Madam Puck agen,
Until the fairest maid of Scottish land
Shall to the supplest of all Scotland's men,
Charm'd by his jumping, give her bed and hand:'—
This said, he mumbled o'er me in my den
His damned spell too hard to understand,
Of virtue to impound, and cage me there,
Ev'n till the day fore-doom'd to let me loose to air.

LXXVI.

And further, he, to sunder us the more,
And interpose large space between us twain,
To Melrose Abbey journeying, with him bore
The spicy jail, where lay my spouse in pain,
And gave it to the Monks, skill'd deep in lore,
That in their charge it might for years remain,
To grace the Abbey-table, and supply
Their kail on feasting-days with pepper hot and dry.

LXXVII.

And there, methinks, for ages it has been;
Till, as roll'd onward Time's fulfilling round,
By the wise care of our fair fairy-queen,
To Rob the Ranter's house the way it found,
Where, from her box upstarting to his eyne,
(The spell that moment lost its power t' impound,)
My wife bade Scotland's supplest man prepare,
All for her weal and his, to jump at Anster Fair.

LXXVIII.

For me—when first that stern felonious Knight,
Had dungeon'd me in penal-pot so fast,
My jail he did commit that very night
To Pittenweem's fat Monks of belly vast,
That from its small profundity they might
Supply with mustard every rich repast,
And in the abbey-pantry guard the cell,
Where I, alas! was doom'd for many an age to dwell.

LXXIX.

And there I dwelt in dolesome house of clay,
Far sunder'd from my wife in sad divorce;
Till onward drew the freedom-giving day,
Fix'd and appointed in Time's fatal course,
When Oberon, the silver-scepter'd fay,
That rules his phantom-tribes with gentle force,
My mustard-pot by secret means convey'd
To Maggie's house—the house of Scotland's fairest maid.

LXXX.

Here as one night upon her supper-board,
Imbogg'd amid my biting mire I lay,
My king a moment broke the spell abhorr'd,
That kept me pent and pester'd night and day;
I rose, I loos'd my tongue to mortal word,
Commanding her to publish sans delay,
The merry games effectual to decide
What supplest-sinew'd Scot should gain her for his bride.

LXXXI.

Abroad the games were blown o'er Scottish ground,
And hurry'd thousands in to Anster Fair:
The work is done—the supplest man is found;
He sits the Bridegroom and the Landlord there;
The fairest Maid of all the realm around
Sits yonder, star-like shining on her chair;
The happiest couple they of all beside:
God bless you richly both, fair Bridegroom and fair Bride!

LXXXII.

Nor think, my wedded dears! that you alone
  By ANSTER's gamesome FAIR are render'd blest;
We too, that have so long with mutual moan
  In torment and divorcement liv'd distrest,
Meet now again, (great thanks to Oberon!)
  Re-wedded, re-possessing, re-possess'd,
A pair of happy fays conjoin'd for ever,
Whom henceforth wizards hate shall have no might
    to sever.

LXXXIII.

And now, my Lord, O King! we must away
  To taste the sweets of new-found liberty,
To ride astraddle on the lunar ray
  In airy gallop to the top of sky,
And lave our limber limbs, and plash and play
  Amid the milk that dims the galaxy:
Farewell!—may joys be rain'd on each of you!
Adieu, thou Bridegroom sweet! thou bonny Bride,
    adieu!"—

LXXXIV.

This having said, he on his shiny hair
Did gracefully his silver'd hat replace,
And seizing by the hand his lady fair,
A while look'd smerking, winking, in her face;
Then swift as spark from fire, or beam from star,
That unsubstantial, slim, frail, fairy-brace,
From table heaving off their phantasms small,
Sheer through the window flew of MAGGIE's dining-hall.

LXXXV.

Sheer through the window fleetly flew the twain,
Mocking the eye that try'd to follow them;
Yet, strange to add! nor wood nor glassy pane
Was injur'd of the fay-pierc'd window frame
Amazement ran in ev'ry beating vein
Of Bride, and Groom, and King, and Lord, and Dame,
As they beheld the coupled goblins fly
Through window-shut and glass abroad into the sky.

LXXXVI.

Recover'd quickly of their short surprise,
They drew to table nearer each his chair;
A bumper fill, the sportive Monarch cries,
To Tom and Lady Puck, the elfin pair!
Landlord and guest his brimming glass supplies
From bottle with the dainty vine-blood rare;
Clean to the dregs their glasses drink they all,
As "Tom and Mrs Puck" sound echoing through the
hall.

LXXXVII.

Thus they the social happy minutes spend
In wine, and chat, and harmless revelry,
Till slow began the round moon to descend
Down the starr'd ladder of the western sky,
And sleep, that toil-worn man's frail frame must mend,
His spunge's balsam wrung on human eye;
From table, then, withdrew to sleeping room,
Courtier, and King, and Dame, and Bride, and glad
Bridegroom.

END OF ANSTER FAIR.

HARIM.

A

PASTORAL.

HARIM.

A

PASTORAL.

Time, Morning.—Scene, The Holy Land.

Fair op'd on Dothan's verdant lawn
The eye-lids of the golden dawn;
The parted clouds, that, white and rare,
Had grown upon the nightly air,
Now smitten, where on high they rest,
By the red arrows of the East,

Melt in a dewy silent shower,
Precious to tree, and bush, and flower.
Each stately tree, that heav'nward heaves
His green magnificence of leaves,
Each lowly bush, that waves in air
Her verdure of entangled hair,
Each flower, whose sweets impregn the gale,
Each pile of grass that greens the dale,
Now, gemm'd with dewy jewels gay,
Their glancing glories round display:
'Twas as if Morning, ere her first
Red lustre from the Ocean burst,
Had gather'd all the gems that pave
The precious bed of Ophir's wave,
And flung them from her lap around
On Dothan's brightly-pearled ground.

Such was the inviting matin hour
When Harim left his shepherd bower,—

HARIM, the fairest shepherd-swain
That ever pip'd on Dothan's plain:
His bower he left, and sought the spot
Where stood his SHERAH's shaded cot,—
SHERAH, the fairest shepherd-maid
Of all that danc'd in Dothan's shade.

As through her window, where entwine
The vine-branch and the jessamine,
The rising Sun into her cot
His rays of yellow lustre shot,
Close by her wall, where palm-tree high
Curves his green roof of leaves in sky,
Unseen, young HARIM took is stand,
His silver-stringed harp in hand,
And thus his matin descant sung,
With wedded skill of hand and tongue:—

Awake, my Fair! My Love, arise!
Lo! the day breaks, the shadow flies;

The gaudy Morn, rob'd round with beams,
Hath left the wave of orient streams,
And in her sun-bright sandals proud,
Walks on yon rosy eastern cloud:
O'er the green breast of every lawn
Long level lines of light are drawn;
And on each hill's white summit play
The rivers of refulgent day.
Again the flowers on earth appear,
Again our God revives the year;
The vine anew expands her bloom,
The tender grapes yield sweet perfume;
Blooms the broad world, and joy walks forth
On the great circle of the earth.
Methinks each mountain lifts his voice,
Each valley bids our hearts rejoice;
Hills, valleys, fields, proclaim that God
Is in his grandeur gone abroad:
Exulting nature chides our stay;—
Arise, my fair one! come away!

High on his cloud of saffron hue,
That richly laps him round from view,
Hark, how the sky-lark from his throat
Sends far his world-awak'ning note,
Proclaiming the sweet hour of prime,
From his aerial tow'r sublime.
The children of the sky awake;
And, from green tree and bush and brake,
Sing forth their little souls, and raise
The loud united hymn of praise.
For past is now the day of rain,
And spring, from Sheba's land, again
Hath sent into our native grove
Her sweetly-moaning turtle-dove.
Methinks each bird that greets the day,
Seems to rebuke our slow delay:—
Arise, my fair one! come away!

'Tis sweet, from slope of hill, to eye
The day-spring kindling in the sky,

When Beauty, dancing hand in hand
With Morn, flings rose on every land,
And o'er the mountains' haughty heads
Her wrapping golden mantle spreads:
But dearer, Sherah, 'tis to me
The day-spring of thine eye to see,
And Beauty's every charm and grace
Summ'd up and shining in thy face.
'Tis sweet to hear the lark on wing,
His world-awak'ning anthem sing,
And all the winged sons of sky
Hymn to the Lord their harmony;
More dear, my love, it is to me,
Reclin'd beneath our citron-tree,
To hear thy wedded voice and lute
With joyous song the morn salute,
Praising the God that paints the day
With golden colours rich and gay:—
Arise, my fair one! come away!

In vain for me the turtle-dove
Proclaims the spring in Dothan's grove;
In vain for me the dew-nurs'd mead
With crocus and with rose is spread;
In vain for me, on mountain's side,
The vine puts forth her budding pride:
No bloom, no joy for me is there,
If sunder'd far from thee, my fair!
Thy presence to my heart is dew;
Thy presence gives the rose its hue;
Thy presence bloom and beauty flings
On all the glittering face of things.
Then come, my love, and let us go
To the fresh lawn where vi'lets blow,
Or to yon sunward grassy steep,
Where, at the dawn of morn, our sheep
Rejoice amid the dews to play:—
Arise, my fair one! come away

So sung the Hebrew shepherd-swain
His harp-assisted tender strain,

While at her lattice, flow'r-inwove,
Listen'd the damsel, of his love.
Nor in her cottage tarried long
The maiden, backward to the song:
She came; and with her shepherd-boy
Is gone to taste the morning's joy,
On yon green steep, where lambkins play,
Amid the dews at dawn of day.

ODE TO PEACE.

ODE TO PEACE.

DAUGHTER of God! that sits on high
Amid the dances of the sky,
And guidest with thy gentle sway
The planets on their tuneful way;
  Sweet PEACE! shall ne'er again
The smile of thy most holy face,
From thine ethereal dwelling-place,
Rejoice the wretched weary race
  Of discord-breathing men?

Too long, O gladness-giving Queen!
Thy tarrying in heaven has been;
Too long o'er this fair blooming world
The flag of blood has been unfurled,
  Polluting God's pure day;
Whilst, as each maddening people reels,
War onward drives his scythed wheels,
And at his horse's bloody heels
  Shriek Murder and Dismay.

Oft have I wept to hear the cry
Of widow wailing bitterly;
To see the parent's silent tear
For children fallen beneath the spear;
  And I have felt so sore
The sense of human guilt and woe,
That I, in Virtue's passioned glow,
Have cursed (my soul was wounded so)
  The shape of Man I bore!

Then come from thy serene abode,
Thou gladness-giving Child of God!
And cease the world's ensanguined strife,
And reconcile my soul to life;
For much I long to see,
Ere to the grave I down descend,
Thy hand her blessed branch extend,
And to the world's remotest end
Wave Love and Harmony!

THE END.

A. Balfour, Printer, Merchant Court